

JUDAISM

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LITERATURE AND THE JEWISH CRISIS

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THE BEST KEPT SECRET OF THE RABBINIC TRADITION

Samson R. Levey

REFORM JUDAISM—THE NEW LOOK

Joshua O. Haberman

Joseph R. Narot

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

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American Jewish Congress

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a world-view on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God."—From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.

יזכור ה'

את אחינו הקדושים והגבורים

שמסרו את נפשם על קדוש השם,

על כבוד עם ישראל

ועל תורתו

הצבי ישראל על במותיך חלל

איך נפלו גבורים

הנאהבים והנעימים בחייהם

ובמותם לא נפרדו

יהי זכרם ברוך

The First Reader

THE POWER AND IMPRESSIVENESS OF THE BIBLE

and its capacity to speak to the human condition derives in no small measure from the fact that it is not a collection of theological tracts, but an anthology of literary masterpieces. The human imagination, which includes the gift of empathy, is often able to probe deeper into the human soul than the dialectics of reason—especially when confronted by major catastrophes that defy the canons of normal rationality. The most massive instance in our time is the Holocaust, with which we shall long continue to wrestle. Not only does the Holocaust evoke fundamental challenges with regard to God, it also raises basic issue of identity, both human and Jewish.

The present issue of JUDAISM contains four papers, which we have subsumed under the title, *Literature and the Jewish Crisis*. Two of these papers deal with distinguished literary figures of our time, Chaim Grade and Elie Wiesel, who have made the Holocaust central to their life's work.

Grade, a novelist and poet, is one of the giants of contemporary Jewish literature. Since he does all his writing in Yiddish and very little of his work has thus far been translated into English, he is, unfortunately, far too little known. In the paper, "A Dialogue of the Mind with Itself," *Edward Alexander* presents a profound and sympathetic analysis of one of Grade's masterly tales, "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner." Through the medium of literature, rather than theology, Grade delineates the impact of the Holocaust upon the believing, as well as upon the non-believing, Jew, and does so far more effectively than is the case with much of contemporary writing on the theme.

In his paper, "On Stepping Into the Fiery Gates," *Irving Halperin* raises the important question of how the post-Holocaust generation can enter into the awesome experience of the Nazi victims. He suggests that literature can perform this function of spiritual catharsis, as in the work of Primo Levi and, even more powerfully, in the writings of Elie Wiesel.

The third article, in this section, "An Ancient and Modern Identity Crisis," by *Marc Lee Raphael*, deals with the Roman-Jewish historian, Josephus. His chequered life created an identity-crisis for him which was a forerunner of similar experiences by thousands of later Jews. He was both witness and participant in the greatest catastrophe in Jewish history before the Nazi campaign of extermination—the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in the year 70 C.E. With the "Roman exile," the birth of the Jewish yearning for the return to the land of

Israel was born. This unbroken link of love and loyalty produced the Zionist movement, the rebirth of the Hebrew language and literature, and the establishment of the State of Israel.

The relationship of secular Hebrew culture today to the traditional Jewish values of yesterday is very complex, marked both by continuity and discontinuity, including even radical rebellion against the tradition. The fourth paper of this group, "The Absent God," by *Harold Fisch*, is an analysis of the religio-mystical background of the yearning for Zion which, in secularized form, became the Zionist ideal. Though they may lack the God-consciousness and commitment of their forebears, contemporary Israeli poets of secular orientation are, nevertheless, held in thrall, if the paradox be permitted, by the presence of an absent God. The triad of God, the people and the land of Israel, rich in overtones and ambivalences, continues to remain central to their vision and their word.

There is a wide-spread feeling in many circles that the struggle of the blacks today for equality and freedom is on a collision course with Zionist aspirations and the survival of the State of Israel. Anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiments are not lacking in the black community. That this need not be the case—and, it is to be hoped, will not—is the conclusion derived from the illuminating paper, "Franz Fanon as a Zionist," by *Norman Levine*.

In presenting the highlights of Fanon's philosophy of negritude, he indicates that the Algerian intellectual leader was not only indebted to Zionism as a model for his own thinking, but had a deep sympathy for the Jewish situation in the modern world. Fanon went further. He viewed the emergence of the State of Israel in very positive terms. Unlike so many other apostles of the war against colonialism, he did not regard Israel as an imperialistic venture, but, on the contrary, as part of the world-wide struggle for the emancipation of all oppressed peoples.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to find another instance in history of an active movement consciously revising its outlook on a fundamental element of its philosophy, publicly professing its change of view, and actively beginning a new course of action. This is precisely what Reform Judaism has done in our time with regard to Zionism.

The older "classical" Reform embodied in the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 was unequivocally hostile to the Zionist ideal. The Columbus Program adopted by the Central Conference of American Rabbis fifty years later represented a complete *volte-face* on many aspects of the earlier statement, particularly on the role of the land of Israel in Judaism and the Zionist ideal.

Two distinguished members of the Reform rabbinate discuss this unique phenomenon. *Joshua O. Haberman*, in "The Place of Israel in Reform Jewish Theology," traces the history of the Reform attitude toward Zionism from the inception of the movement until today, *Joseph R. Narot*, in his paper, "Reform Judaism's New Mission," suggests that the earlier attitude, which unquestionably deserved to be abandoned, has within it some significant elements of value. He praises its holding aloft the universalistic elements of Judaism which are, at the moment, in danger of being submerged by the tidal wave of particularism rampant everywhere. Both writers agree that in the tension between these two poles lies the unique spirit of the Jewish tradition, as well as its potential contribution to the future of the nations of mankind.

It is a truism of historical research that at its origin, and for decades following, Christianity was a Jewish sect, particularly in Palestine. The Judeo-Christians, whose original leader was James, the brother of Jesus, were strictly observant of Jewish law, differing from their fellow-Jews only in their faith that the Messiah had already come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. It is, therefore, quite understandable that relations between Judeo-Christians and the Jewish community in a country as small as Palestine would, in the earliest period, be fairly close.

Against this background, *Samson H. Levey* presents a sensational hypothesis. In his paper, "The Best-kept Secret of the Rabbinic Tradition," he argues that the respected Jewish sage, Simeon Ben Zoma, was a secret adherent of the Judeo-Christian sect. Dr. Levey seeks to adduce evidence from the rabbinic sources available which he believes point in this direction. The thesis is sure to arouse vigorous discussion.

One of the most promising developments in contemporary cultural life has been the introduction of Judaic courses in several hundred colleges and universities throughout the United States and Canada, and the enthusiastic reception they have received from students. Much more remains to be done until the imbalance of the contemporary college curriculum is corrected. The role of Judaism and the Jewish people in the history of civilization is still drastically short-changed in text books, lectures, and courses. *Egal Feldman* makes a strong plea to rectify the situation in his paper, "Jewish History in American Higher Education," both from the general standpoint of scholarly truth and the particular needs of the Jewish community in its struggle for meaningful survival.

Unquestionably, the most distinguished figure produced by western Jewry in the eighteenth century was Moses Mendelssohn, whose career bestrides the Emancipation era and is its most striking symbol. His place in Jewish history is secure, but his literary, scholarly and philosophic work has tended to be ignored. Recently, there has been a welcome change in this regard. His classic work, *Jerusalem*, has recently appeared in an excellent English version and his thought is being evaluated anew in several quarters. *Noah H. Rosenbloom's* study, "Mendelssohn's Redefinition of Judaism—Tension and Solution" is an important contribution in this task of rediscovery.

It is, unfortunately, true that Jew-hatred, to which the French bigot, Drumont, gave the philosophic-sounding name of anti-Semitism, has been a central pivot of Jewish history. In his article "Anti-Semitism and Jewish Historiography," *Allen S. Maller* discusses the attitude toward anti-Semitism in the work of five outstanding Jewish historians: Heinrich Graetz, Simon Dubnow, Salo Baron, Raphael Mahler and Howard Sachar. The variety of their views testifies to the complex character of this chronic disease of the human spirit.

R.G.

A Dialogue of the Mind with Itself: *Chaim Grade's Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner*

EDWARD ALEXANDER

LIONEL TRILLING ONCE SUGGESTED THAT A PRIMARY reason for the apparent decline of the novel as a form of art was the fact that ever since Auschwitz the task of revealing and articulating man's depravity, an activity which had been a chief occupation of the human mind for four hundred years, had been rendered unnecessary:

Society's resistance to the discovery of depravity has ceased; now everyone knows that Thackeray was wrong, Swift right. The world and the soul have split open of themselves and are all agape for our revolted inspection. The simple eye of the camera shows us, at Belsen and Buchenwald, horrors that quite surpass Swift's powers, a vision of life turned back to its corrupted elements more literal and fantastic than that which Montaigne ascribed to organized society. A characteristic activity of mind is therefore no longer needed. Indeed, before what we now know the mind stops; the great psychological fact of our time which we all observe with baffled wonder and shame is that there is no possible way of responding to Belsen and Buchenwald. The activity of mind fails before the incommunicability of man's suffering.¹

Trilling was writing in 1948, and however true his denial of the possibility of responding to the fact of Belsen and Buchenwald was at that time, it no longer seems an accurate description of our situation with respect to the Holocaust. At least it is inaccurate if we take Trilling literally. In the past twenty-five years we have seen that there are many possible ways of responding to Belsen and Buchenwald, not least prominent among them the fictional way whose purported demise Trilling was discussing in his essay on "Art and Fortune." The fiction of Elie Wiesel, Tadeusz Borowski, Josef Bor, and Saul Bellow (I have in mind *Mr. Sammler's Planet*), the poetry of Nelly Sachs and some of the work of Paul Celan and Anthony Hecht—all of these are possible ways of responding to Belsen and Buchenwald. But, of course, what Trilling really meant to say was that there seemed to be no way of *adequately* responding to this spectacle of a mass genocide which had engaged the energy, the ingenuity, and the resources of the German people day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, until its murderous work had been completed or else interrupted by invading armies.

What constitutes an adequate response to the murder of six mil-

1. "Art and Fortune," in *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: The Viking Press, 1950), pp. 264-65.

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lion Jews and half a million Gypsies it is difficult to say. When Matthew Arnold demanded "adequacy" of literature, in his Oxford University lecture of 1857, "On the Modern Element in Literature," he wanted a literature which could give to his contemporaries an intellectual deliverance from their doubts and confusions by providing them with the complete intelligence of their historical situation. But even if one could have a literature which seemed adequately to comprehend and adequately to represent the spectacle of the concentration camps, would one be satisfied with it? I doubt it. When you wrestle with an angel, it is probably better to lose than to win, and this is more especially the case when you wrestle with the angel of death that visited Auschwitz, Belsen, and Buchenwald. We are, in other words, dealing here with one of those problematical human enterprises in which some degree of failure or inadequacy is a pre-condition of success, in which we expect no more than a shattered majesty and a noble *imperfection*. Perhaps this is why a form of literature which is characterized by uncertainty, inaction, and internal contradiction will be a more adequate response to the Holocaust than one characterized by a single tangible voice confidently committed to the transmutation of suffering into beauty and meaninglessness into significance.

For this reason, among others, I would like to recommend to those who do not already know it Chaim Grade's short story entitled "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner." If we had not long ago grown accustomed to the fact that Yiddish literature, apart from the work of I. B. Singer, remains *terra incognita* for most American readers, it would be astonishing that Grade's story is not better known than it is, and does not appear regularly in college anthologies of the short story. Yet it is by no means inaccessible, for it has been available since 1954 in a fine English translation by Milton Himmelfarb in *A Treasury of Yiddish Stories*, edited by Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg. Its author was born in Vilna, Poland, in 1910 and spent his youthful years in yeshiva study. For a time he studied with the Musarists, the ascetic sect described in the story.² He published his first book of poems in 1936, escaped to the Soviet Union in 1941, and reached New York in 1948. "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner" was included in a collection of short stories published by Grade in 1955, entitled *My Mother's Sabbaths*.

"My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner" is both a great and an important story because it presents with tremendous dramatic force the most terrifying quandaries of our time in the special shape and with the special urgency that they have received from the cataclysms of twentieth-century history and, particularly, from the destruction of European Jew-

2. In Biblical Hebrew *musar* means "chastisement" and, hence, "instruction" as to right conduct; by extension, it may be said to comprise the ascetic and devotional element of religious ethics.

ry. The story is told in the first person by a character named Chaim, who seems to be the author himself, thinly disguised for fictional purposes. In the course of describing his quarrel or, rather, his series of quarrels with his former Musarist schoolmate, Hersh Rasseyner, Chaim creates a philosophical dialogue between the elements of faith and of doubt in his own soul. In the story, Hersh Rasseyner, who never departs from orthodoxy, speaks for religious faith, and Chaim, the former yeshivah student turned writer, for religious skepticism; but, in truth, the voices we hear in this dialogue are the accusing and self-accusing voices of the author himself. In fact, the mental processes underlying the story's composition are made transparent towards the end, when Chaim says to his philosophical adversary:

"Reb Hersh . . . as I sat here listening to you, I sometimes thought I was listening to myself. And since it's harder to lie to yourself than to someone else, I will answer you as though you were my own conscience. . . ."

Chaim begins his story in 1937 at a point when he had already separated himself from the Musarists and their unworldly ways. He is giving a lecture—apparently on a literary subject, for he is derisively referred to by Hersh as a writer of "godless verses"—in Bialystok, near the yeshivah in which he had been a student seven years earlier. Some of his former schoolmates, in defiance of the yeshivah's prohibition against secular learning, attend his lecture, and others visit him secretly. But the one former schoolmate whom Chaim truly desires to see again does not appear; and that is Hersh Rasseyner. Nor is this surprising, for whereas many of the other Musarists chafe under the severe religious discipline which binds them, Hersh thrives upon it and seems never to be tempted by the lures of secular knowledge or the pleasures of the world outside of the shtetl.

Chaim and Hersh do, however, meet unexpectedly in the street and at once discover that they already speak different languages. Chaim has so far forgotten his religious training that he unthinkingly greets Hersh with the modish "How are you?" a question which, in the yeshivah, means, "What is the state of your religious life?" Hersh does not lose the opportunity to remind his lapsed brother that his frivolous social use of what is still, for others, the most compelling of questions, reveals the diminution of life that attends the lapse from piety: "'And how are you, Chaim Vilner?³ My question, you see, is more important.'" Hersh then proceeds, in the middle of the street, with a sublime indifference to social decorum that shocks the assimilated narrator, to reproach Chaim for having allowed himself to be lured from a religious life into the "enlightened" world of western Europe and to warn him that all his

3. Since surnames have no functional existence in the shtetl, a man may be identified by the place from which he comes. See M. Zborowski and E. Herzog, *Life Is With People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1962), p. 150.

successes in the secular world will leave him less happy than he would have been had he remained in the yeshivah. The life of piety, he asserts, is validated by God; the life of letters by literary critics.

"You write godless verses and they reward you by patting you on the cheek. Now they're stuffing you with applause as they stuff a goose with grain. But later you'll see, when you've begun to go to their school, oh, won't the worldly ones beat you! Which of you isn't hurt by criticism? Is there one of you really so self-confident that he doesn't go around begging for some authority's approval? Is there one of you who's prepared to publish his book anonymously?⁴ The big thing with you people is that your name should be seen and known. You have given up our tranquillity of spirit for what? For passions you will never be able to satisfy and for doubts you will never be able to answer, no matter how much you suffer."

Chaim, for his part, accuses his pious friend of the sin of pride, for there is such a thing as pride in one's modesty and humility. Whereas Hersh alleges that the appetite for pleasure can never be satiated because it grows by what it feeds on, Chaim replies that in those people for whom pleasure and fame offer no temptation, what looks to the world like self-denial is really self-indulgence. Besides, Chaim denies that he himself has become a mere pleasure-seeker; accused of running away from the religious life, he maintains that he has actually returned to his proper home among the common people who, in the shtetl, were expected to support the very religious scholars (like Hersh) who deplored their worldliness and impiety.

To these arguments Hersh does not condescend to reply. But the argument has already proceeded far enough to assure the narrator of the correctness of his decision to leave the yeshivah. Or was it his decision? Ironically, he wants to believe both that the decision was the correct one and that *he* did not make it. "If at the time, I said to myself, I didn't know why and where I was going, someone else thought it out for me, someone stronger than I. That someone else was—my generation and my environment." It is the feeblest of faiths, and like all faiths in a generation, youthful or decrepit, it does not long survive the test of experience.

The second part of the story commences two years later, when the generation and environment in which the emancipated Chaim had put his faith had produced, among other things, the two great revolutionary powers of the modern European world, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. It is 1939, they are carving up eastern Europe between them, and the Soviets are in control of Vilna. "Hunger raged in the city. Every face was clouded with fear of the arrests carried out at night by NKVD agents. My heart was heavy. Once, standing in line for a ration of bread,

4. Hersh's acerbity on this point has a foundation in Jewish tradition. In the world of Talmudic scholarship, it is the name of an author's work and not his personal name that identifies him.—*Life Is With People*, p. 110.

I suddenly saw Hersh Rasseyner.” For the Soviet domination of Vilna, Hersh (now a married man)⁵ holds Chaim partly responsible. The Soviet Union had, of course, been the great, almost messianic, hope of secular progressives, and in Hersh’s view such idol-worship is the logical culmination of the sentimental idolatry of the proletariat which Chaim had expressed to him in 1937. But Chaim is as little willing to accept responsibility for the Soviet occupation of Vilna as he had been for his own departure from piety into secularism. He disavows all responsibility for secular progressivism gone wrong by telling Hersh that “‘I bear no more responsibility for all that than you do for me.’” But the analogy is imprudently chosen, for it is precisely Hersh’s point that under God every man is his brother’s keeper and that human beings are so interconnected that no-one may evade responsibility for his acts: “‘You’re wrong, Chaim. I do bear responsibility for you.’ He retreated a few steps and motioned with his eyes to the Red Army soldiers, as though to say, ‘And you for them.’” Chaim’s willingness to read even in Hersh’s physical movements a reproach to himself is a reminder that, although the story is written, literally and figuratively, from Chaim’s point of view, it is eminently a dialogue of the mind with itself.

The next meeting between the two men takes place on our side of the great divide of twentieth century history, the Holocaust in which six million Jews were murdered. The scene is Paris, 1948, and the two old friends, who have by now become rather old antagonists, meet on the Métro. The narrator has spent the war years wandering across Russia, Poland, and western Europe; Hersh Rasseyner has been in a concentration camp in Latvia, and is now the head of a yeshiva in Salzheim, Germany. The men greet each other affectionately, and when Hersh asks Chaim “How are you?” he no longer asks in derision but in the genuine Mussarist way, out of concern for the well-being of his friend. Soon, however, Chaim senses that Hersh’s warmth flows from his assumption that no sane man, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, can believe in worldly expedients for human and social redemption. Ironically, each man virtually takes it for granted that the Holocaust has destroyed the foundations upon which the other’s life had until then been based. If Hersh assumes that anyone with eyes in his head can now see that to depend upon man-made ethical systems, works of art, and social machinery to transform the human condition is like relying on razor-blades to hew down giant oak trees, then Chaim, for his part, assumes that no sane man can still believe in a God who presides over concentration camps and crematoria. Chaim is astounded that anyone can wring some

5. This is not to be interpreted as a concession to the flesh except insofar as, in the shtetl, boys destined to study the Law were married early so that their needs would be satisfied and they would be able to concentrate on their books.—*Life Is With People*. p. 136.

affirmation of God's existence out of the concentration camps; and Hersh asserts that life is for him, in the post-Holocaust world, impossible without God: " 'How could I stand it without Him in this murderous world?' "

For the debate which ensues over the relative merits of faith in God and faith in the world in a universe that has been harrowed by the Holocaust, the Paris setting is peculiarly appropriate. Paris, after all, had once been the scene of the most gigantic and conscious attempt of modern times to realize a wholly secular faith. It was in Paris that the altar was replaced by the scaffold, the priest by the executioner, the congregation by a howling mob thirsting for *human* blood, the crucifix which had once been worn on the breasts of the citizenry by a miniature replica of the guillotine. For early sympathizers of the French Revolution like Wordsworth, "Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,/ But to be young was very Heaven!" But when François Mauriac witnessed trainloads of Jewish children standing at the Austerlitz station in Paris awaiting deportation to the death camps, he knew that "the dream which Western man conceived in the eighteenth century, whose dawn he thought he saw in 1789, and which . . . had grown stronger with the progress of enlightenment and the discoveries of science—this dream vanished finally for me before those trainloads of little children."⁶

Hersh Rasseynner never even participated in this dream, and so it is all the more incredible to him that his friend Chaim should continue to cling to it after the Holocaust. He looks at the statues in the niches of the walls of the Hôtel de Ville representing the great statesmen, heroes, scholars, and artists of modern France and pointedly asks his emancipated and worldly friend, " 'Who are those idols?' " From Hersh's point of view, Chaim has forsaken God only to seek objects of worship among these icons of mere human beings. In defense of these statues and of his reverence for their originals, Chaim praises the power of art to induce imaginative sympathy. He singles out from among the various statues those of poets, and trots out for his benighted religious friend the *apologia* for literature as the great instrument of moral imagination which was first articulated by Shelley and De Quincey and then given canonical status by George Eliot. But is it good enough in the aftermath of the Holocaust? Hersh does not think so. Besides, the vaunted sympathy of artists and poets with lustful and wicked people arises from the fact that they recognize themselves in such people; hence, what looks like sympathetic tolerance is only self-pity.

The Parisian setting of the argument over the meaning of the Holocaust is also used by Grade to emphasize an important difference in the personalities of the protagonists which was touched on briefly in

6. Introduction to Elie Wiesel's *Night* (New York: Avon Books, 1969), p. 7.

the opening section of the story. As the argument becomes more heated, Hersh becomes more emotional and Chaim becomes—more embarrassed. A bearded Jew is shaking his finger at the sculptures of the Hôtel de Ville, and passing Parisians have begun to stop and stare. “Hersh did not so much as notice the passers-by. I felt embarrassed in the face of these Frenchmen, smiling and looking at us curiously.” Apparently the vindication of God is a more engrossing activity than the vindication of literature. Later in the story, Hersh suggests that the extreme form of the worldly man’s concern about what other people will think of him is the European practice of dueling.

“Think of it! For a word they didn’t like they used to fight with swords or shoot one another. To keep public opinion from sneering or a fool from calling them coward, though they trembled at the thought of dying, they went to their death.”

Once he has got over his embarrassment at Hersh’s shouting and gesticulating and long-beardedness, Chaim turns to the question of what, if anything, the Holocaust meant. Some of his remarks reenforce our uneasiness over the whole enterprise of trying to assign meaning to a moral debacle which defies it, for Chaim has a tendency to speak of the concentration camps as an educational “experience.” He asserts that not even the camps could change men from what they were; nevertheless, “‘in the crisis men saw themselves and others undisguised.’” Hersh, for his part, wonders why Chaim should even think it worthy of remark that suffering produced neither wisdom nor sanctity in men who did not possess them before entering the camps. Man is, indeed, capable of transformation, he argues, but only through religion. Hersh himself, in espousing asceticism and piety, had not been following the path of least resistance but of greatest blessedness, for his lusts and obstinacies had been, he maintains, as strong as those of any man. But he had accepted, as his enlightened friend had not, the fact that there are certain human impulses which require, not mere enlightenment, improving, and perfuming, but uprooting; and that rebirth is a painful process because its prerequisite is the death of the old self. Rebirth, however, can be effected only through religion. If religion cannot transform man, nothing can; worldly, human instruments—art, politics, science, philosophy—can never raise man above himself for the simple reason that they originate with man.

In the face of this argument, Chaim nevertheless clings to the rhetoric of enlightenment: “‘You can’t banish shadows with a broom, only with a lighted lamp.’” His invocation of enlightenment and its apostles, enshrined in the Hôtel de Ville, provokes Hersh to a long and moving discourse on the impassable gulf between knowledge and goodness, a gulf which he had grasped intellectually in his yeshiva study, but which was fully revealed to him only in the concentration camps. He

recalls to Chaim that the Germans, who are always reminding people of the fact, have produced at least as many great men worthy of niches in the Hôtel de Ville as have the French, and in the realm of moral philosophy have produced more than the French. But did those moral philosophers influence the German people to become better? Or were the philosophers themselves good men? In the concentration camps Hersh had, for the first time, come in contact with men—presumably assimilated Jews—who had been trained in the great German universities, and for the first time felt the power and, even, majesty of secular knowledge. Yet he was not tempted by it, away from piety, because he concluded from what he saw in the camps that the moral philosophers of western Europe are men who say, and do not.

“Occasionally I found in their writings as much talent and depth as in our own Holy Books, if the two may be mentioned in one breath. But they are satisfied with talk! And I want you to believe me when I say that I concede that their poets and scientists wanted to be good. Only—only they weren’t able to. And if some did have good qualities, they were exceptions. The masses and even their wise men didn’t go any farther than fine talk. As far as talking is concerned, they talk more beautifully than we do.”

A philosophical morality, Hersh implies, looks good in fair weather, but in concentration camps sterner stuff is required.

For one schooled in the yeshivah, Hersh shows a remarkable familiarity with enlightenment principles and rhetoric. He says that the reason why the moral philosophers were incapable of becoming better in action than they were was that they were committed to the pursuit of pleasure. The pursuit of pleasure or joy or happiness has been enjoined on western man in a variety of forms, from Epicurus (and it is worthy of note that the Yiddish word for heretic is *apikoyres*, derived from Epicurean) through the Declaration of Independence (where we are pledged to “the pursuit of happiness”). But, according to Hersh, the most enlightened and philosophical nation in Europe failed to achieve the goodness of which it wrote so eloquently because “‘pleasure is not something that can be had by itself, [therefore] murder arose among them—the pleasure of murder.’” The dream that worldly wisdom, as distinct from religious piety, could be a guarantee of sanctity, came to its end—or should have—in the concentration camps.

“All the days of my youth I kept my eyes on the earth, without looking at the world. Then came the German. He took me by my Jewish beard, yanked my head up, and told me to look him straight in the eyes. So I had to look into his evil eyes, and into the eyes of the whole world as well. And I saw, Chaim, I saw—you know what I saw. Now I can look at all the idols and read all the forbidden impurities and contemplate all the pleasures of life, and it won’t tempt me any more because now I know the true face of the world.”

Hersh keeps referring to his own experience to reenforce his argu-

ments, but his primary concern is the desire to secure the well-being of his friend by persuading him to forsake the world and return to the Jewish fold. This is what gives the story its dramatic force and makes it more than a Voltairean philosophical dialogue. Feeling responsible for his secularized friend, Hersh must prove to Chaim that the world, which he supposed was striving to improve itself, was striving only for blood, and that it *could* not transform itself for good because its ethical systems were worked out by human minds, and no stream can rise higher than its source. The secular philosophers of western Europe “‘trusted their reasoned assumptions as men trust the ice of a frozen river in winter. Then came Hitler and put his weight on the wisdom of the wise men of the nations. The ice of their slippery reasoning burst, and all their goodness was drowned.’” Centuries of the most highly-refined hair-splitting and logic-chopping on every conceivable moral question had their conclusion in this: “‘there came in the West a booted ruler with a little mustache, and in the East a booted ruler with a big mustache, and both of them together struck the wise man to the ground, and he sank into the mud.’”

By this stage in the argument, Hersh is once again excited to the point where he is shouting. But now Chaim is less concerned about Parisian passersby because he has come to understand that Hersh is shouting in order to reach that buried self of his old friend which has retreated into the depths of his subconsciousness as into an infinitely distant land. “He shouted at me as though I were a dark cellar and he was calling to someone hiding in me.” Hersh’s passion does not affect his fluency because, as he now reveals, during all the long years in the concentration camp he rehearsed his argument for faith in the hope that he might be able one day to use it on his heretical friend, who is fixed in his mind’s eye as the representative of secularized Jews in general.

Although Hersh’s argument, like the story itself, pivots on the question of how to respond to the Holocaust, he is also trying to demonstrate that the Holocaust is only the most devilish of all the human enterprises that engage the energies of those who desert the community of God because they would become like gods themselves. The enlightened Jew, according to Hersh, separated himself from piety because he wished to distinguish himself as an individual, to be acclaimed in life and remembered after death, not as a member of the Community of Israel, but as a great scientist, thinker, or writer. “‘You didn’t violate the commandment against idolatry. Of course not! You were your own gods. You prophesied, “Man will be a god.” So naturally he became a devil.’” Movements of religious reform, which seek to lighten the burden of the Law on the individual, are, in Hersh’s view, as futile and unending as the pursuit of happiness, for in religious matters the lighter the burden is made the harder is it to bear. The man who fasts twice a week does

so without difficulty; the man who fasts once a year finds the task so difficult that he soon ceases to fast altogether. And here, again, the belief which Hersh had long entertained as to the folly of the Jew trying to assimilate himself into the nations and to become like his oppressors, was proved upon his pulses in the concentration camps:

"I lay on the earth and was trampled by the German in his hobnailed boots. Well, suppose that an angel of God had come to me then, that he had bent down and whispered into my ear, 'Hersh, in the twinkling of an eye I will turn you into the German. I will put his coat on you and give you his murderous face; and he will be you. Say the word and the miracle will come to pass.' If the angel had asked me—do you hear, Chaim?—I would not have agreed at all. Not for one minute would I have consented to be the other, the German, my torturer. I want the justice of law! . . . With the Almighty's help I could stand the German's boots on my throat, but if I had had to put on his mask, his murderous face, I would have been smothered as though I have been gassed. And when the German shouted at me, 'You are a slave of slaves,' I answered through my wounded lips, 'Thou hast chosen me.'"

To be murdered and mutilated as the member of a people chosen by God is a better, a more sanctified fate than to survive as a murderer—and certainly a better fate than to be murdered and mutilated in the act of aping the morality and the manners of one's murderer.

Hersh's final plea to his old yeshivah schoolmate is made on behalf of the six million who have been murdered. All Jews, he admits, mourn the third of their people who have been martyred, but not every Jew seems to be aware of what must surely be true, that " 'it was not a third of the House of Israel that was destroyed, but a third of himself, of his body, his soul.' " From Hersh's point of view, every Jew living in the aftermath of the Holocaust lives with a part of his soul in the grave, and it is, therefore, incomprehensible to him that Chaim, who is by no means the least sensitive of Jews, should eat and sleep and laugh and dress quite as if nothing had happened, quite as if the values of the secular world in which he had placed his faith had not collapsed in ruins. For Hersh, nothing seems more luminously self-evident than that, after Auschwitz, nothing is left to us except God, to whom we must cry out, in desperate emulation of those who were slaughtered, " 'For Thy sake are we killed all the day.' "

When Hersh concludes his impassioned plea, the sky is growing darker and the stone figures around the Hôtel de Ville have shrunk, "as though frightened by what Hersh Rasseneyer had said, and quietly burrowed deeper into the walls." Chaim, who has been relatively silent for some time, apart from an occasional demurrer, now must respond to the challenge thrown down by his quarrelsome friend. Grade has given ample opportunity to the spokesman for his anti-self to state the best case that could be made for faith in the wake of the Holocaust; and it would be hard to find a literary work which gives fuller credence to the

ancient theory that a devil's advocate must be admitted into the midst of one's dearest convictions if they are to become sufficiently resilient to survive. Only here the devil's advocate is the advocate of the angels and at times comes so near to speaking with the tongue of an angel that it is not easy to resist him.

That Grade does intend us finally to resist him we can hardly doubt, although the question of "intention" in literature is always a highly problematical one. If, despite Grade's apparent intentions, we find that Hersh gets out of his creator's control and moves us far more powerfully than does Chaim, we must remember that, as Charlotte Brontë said when she was trying to puzzle out how her sister had come to create Heathcliff, "the writer who possesses the creative gift owns something of which he is not always master—something that at times strangely wills and works for itself."⁷

Chaim is given the last word in the story, and it is a fairly lengthy last word, though not as lengthy as the argument just delivered by Chaim's adversary. The gist of Chaim's rebuttal may be summarized fairly briefly, for it is doctrine that is far more familiar to people who read and write literary articles in these times than is Hersh Rasseyner's. As a liberal, Chaim reiterates the doctrine of nineteenth-century liberalism that doubt is not a bad thing, that intellectual heroism consists in being able to live with it, and that revealed truth, by definition, cannot be true for the individual since he has not discovered it but received it ready-made. As an enlightened Jew, Chaim takes pride in shouldering a double responsibility: towards Jewish tradition as well as towards secular culture; and he rejects the attempt of the pious to declare all the species of those who worship man rather than God fundamentally indistinguishable from one another within the vast genus of idolaters. As free-willed individualist, Chaim refuses to be lumped together with murderers, and insists that there are humane secularists and atheists as well as monstrous ones; but as sociological determinist he places the blame for his abandonment of Jewish tradition on precisians like Hersh whose rigid insistence on the narrowest path of piety drove those with more worldly inclinations into outright apostasy. "If we have abandoned Jewish tradition, it's your fault."

But the most terrifying accusation which Hersh has laid against secularized Jews is that their distraction from the Community of Israel made their suffering and their dying in the camps pointless, and that Chaim's continued separation from the Community of Israel prevents him from ascribing even a posthumous meaning to all that suffering. Chaim's indignant reply to this accusation is not, it must be admitted, very convincing. He answers that the Germans were not mistaken in

7. Charlotte Brontë's "Editor's Preface" to 1850 edition of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), p. xxviii.

taking the secularized Jews for complete Jews, and that if the world defines the Jew in this liberal and inclusive way, so, too, must the Master of the World. Otherwise, Hersh would have been incorrect to say that one third of the Jewish people perished in the Holocaust, for large numbers of the victims were, according to Hersh's strict definition, merely quarter-Jews or tenth-Jews, or less. "The gist of what you say . . . is that anyone who isn't your kind of Jew is not a Jew at all. Doesn't that mean that there were more bodies burned than Jews murdered?" Outraged as Chaim is at Hersh's attempt to assign a religious meaning to what has happened—"Even if we were devils," he shouts, 'we couldn't have sinned enough for our just punishment to be a million murdered children.'"—it is clear that he himself is absolutely resistant to the "despairing belief that the world has no sense or meaning." Yet he refuses the religious meaning that Hersh finds in the suffering of those who believed themselves to be sanctifying the name of God because it would consign the suffering of all the others to the shadowy realm of non-meaning.

Chaim's quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner has now come to an end, and in the closing paragraphs of the story Chaim speaks no longer as an adversary but as a reconciler. In other words, the author, himself, has now directly intervened in the attempt to make peace between the two halves of himself which have been in conflict. Speaking through the mouth of his fictional creation, and speaking explicitly as a writer, he prays for a binding together of the religious and secular strands of the Jewish tradition, and claims that in the very cries against God which are uttered by the secular Jewish writers there is yet concealed "a quiet prayer for the Divine Presence, or for the countenance of those destroyed in the flames, to rest on the alienated Jew." The Jewish writer who survived the Holocaust bears the same burden of suffering as does the believing Jew who communes through God with that segment of the Community of Israel and of his own soul that lies in the grave; but the writer, lacking Hersh Rasseyner's faith, can commune with his people only through the "travail of creation."

Chaim Grade's "Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner" is one remarkable product of such travail. Matthew Arnold, whom I cited earlier on the question of what constitutes adequacy in literature, once said that the most inadequate of all kinds of literature was "the dialogue of the mind with itself." It was inadequate for purposes of inspiring and rejoicing readers because it dwelt on suffering which finds no vent in action and represented a "continuous state of mental distress . . . unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done."⁸ But Arnold forgot that there may be subjects

8. Preface to "Poems" (1853), *Poetry and Criticism of Matthew Arnold*, ed. A. Dwight Culler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), pp. 203-04.

which readers would be loath to see used as occasions for the exercise of art's capacity to bring joy out of suffering, and that there may be quandaries which readers do not want solved, but imagined and expressed. That is why Grade's story, which is precisely a "dialogue of the mind with itself," is able to involve us so deeply. It seems to be the dramatic articulation, rather than the philosophic resolution, of doubts and difficulties that now beset all of us. Yeats, perhaps because he lived into the twentieth century, understood this literary paradox better than Arnold did, and that is why he said that "we make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry."⁹

9. William Butler Yeats, "Per Amica Silentia Lunae," in *Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1924), p. 492.

On Stepping Into The "Fiery Gates"

IRVING HALPERIN

"ONE CAN STEP INTO THE FIERY GATES TWENTY-five years later," Elie Wiesel wrote in his book, *One Generation Later*. He believes that it is possible, even for those who were not "there," to understand something of what took place in the "kingdom of night," and that one way to do so is through reading the literature of the Holocaust. If we may grant that it is possible to step into the fiery gates, *how does* one read so that it is possible to step into the fiery gates, *how does* one read so that the Holocaust does not become wrapped in the absorbent of woolly generalizations?

I, myself, as one who was not "there," am able to *feel* the tragedy of the Catastrophe by focusing on a single scene in Wiesel's first book, *Night*. A young boy with "the face of an angel," as the protagonist, Eliezer, says of him, is suspected by the Gestapo of being involved in sabotage. He is tortured but refuses to divulge the information that his persecutors are looking for. Finally, he is sentenced to death by hanging. On the day of his execution, the camp's prisoners, Eliezer among them, are ordered out to the assembly place. There, surrounded by machine-gun armed SS, they are forced to stand at attention while the hanging takes place. After the boy is placed on the gallows, the rope continues to move. "Being so light," Eliezer recalls, the boy struggles for more than half an hour, dying in slow agony.

"Being so light . . ." These words stick in the reader's memory like poisoned burrs. So light, the body of a boy, and so heavy his death . . .

Well, how much moral imagination is required for those of us who were not "there" to see the scene through the narrator's eyes? Is it so impossible to picture the prisoners standing at fixed attention beneath the gallows? Or to imagine them looking up at the dying boy and weeping? Or to see Eliezer, standing in the assembly place, and know what it must have cost him to wonder: "Why must this be? Where is God? How could He justify this boy's death?" These are the anguished thoughts of one whose religious faith, prior to entering Auschwitz, had been unshakable. And can we not comprehend how sorrow turns to anger as Eliezer resolves never to forget the hanging and the other atrocities that he had witnessed in the camps?

That is why it is inappropriate to view the hanging in "Night" as simply another scene in a literary work; rather, it is emblematic of the cosmic tragedy that was the Holocaust. Through Eliezer's eyes, one looks into the face of the boy on the gallows and *feels*, before thinking about

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the mathematics, the statistics and charts concerning the Holocaust dead. It may be impossible for the reader to envision millions of faces, but that of the boy will not let him rest.

True, year by year, the Holocaust recedes, slips away. A generation later, I, like many academics, live in a comfortable home, enjoy an ample wardrobe, own convenient appliances, can afford an occasional vacation abroad. Still, at certain times, when I am speaking to students about the Holocaust, the face of this boy appears to monitor my words, to offer perspective and scale to my values. His dangling figure makes it impossible for me to speak enthusiastically of Progress, of Upward and Onwardness in the evolutionary cycle, of encounter-group instant redemptions, the grace of Consciousness Three.

And, yet, to look too long into the fires of the Inferno is to risk becoming numbed, hardened. Thus, one feels compelled to grasp some "lessons" from reading the literature of the Holocaust. This compulsion drives me to dwell on the question—"How was it possible for many of the persecuted to remain human in the face of the inhuman?" And I invariably remember Primo Levi, an Italian Jew and author of the acclaimed *If This Is a Man*, a personal account of his survival, containing one of the most instructive scenes in Holocaust literature.

One day, Levi and five fellow prisoners were scraping and cleaning the inside of an underground petrol tank at Auschwitz. It was cold and damp inside the tank and "the powder of the rust burnt under the eyelids of the men and coated their throats and mouths." In such a place, through which daylight barely penetrated, Levi began to discuss Dante and *The Divine Comedy* with one of his comrades, Jean, an Alsatian student. What follows is a most learned and subtle discourse on the technical achievements and philosophical nuances of Dante's masterpiece. What Levi especially wanted Jean to grasp is the significance of the following lines:

Think of your breed, for brutish ignorance
Your mettle was not made; you were made men
To follow after knowledge and excellence.

On reciting these lines, Levi felt as though he was hearing them for the first time. For a moment he was so carried away that he forgot where he was. Then, in a flash of recognition, he perceived that this passage had to do with his own lot and those of his fellow-prisoners. What was it that he seems to have recognized? That to be a man, a *mensch*, in the deepest sense of the word, is to respect the human and humane in one's self and others. By contrast, to be unworthy of one's responsibilities as a man is to act out of brutishness and ignorance. In the case of the Nazis, it was to destroy and murder out of a fear of being human; a fear of being human in the sense intended by Jean Paul Sartre's statement in the essay, "Anti-Semite and Jew."

He [the anti-Semite] is a man who is afraid. Not of the Jews, to be sure, but of himself, of his liberty, of his instincts, of his responsibilities, of solitariness of change, of society and of the world—of everything except the Jews. He is a coward who does not want to admit his cowardice to himself; a murderer who represses and censures his tendency to murder without being able to hold it back . . . a malcontent who dares not revolt from fear of the consequences of his rebellion . . . He chooses the permanence and impenetrability of the warrior who obeys his leaders . . . He chooses to acquire nothing, to deserve nothing; he assumes that everything is given him as a birthright—and he is not noble . . . The Jew only serves him as a pretext; elsewhere his counterpart will make use of the Negro or the man of yellow skin . . . Anti-Semitism, in short, is fear of the human condition. The anti-Semite is a man who wishes to be pitiless stone, a furious torrent, a devastating thunderbolt—anything except a man.

In Levi's book there is an especially pertinent indictment of those who needed to be "pitiless stone," who needed to depersonalize their victims. Thus, for example, there is the time when Levi was standing before some German women in a civilian administration office at Auschwitz. He had been summoned there. The women stared contemptuously at him, nudging one another in bemusement. The prisoner, the Jew, was not clean; he smelled, sorely in need of a bath. Noted too, was how thin he was, as though he deliberately were not availing himself of the rations given to prisoners. Such a despicable creature deserved his unenviable situation, did he not? In short, these women made no attempt to find out who was the man standing before them. They did not want to know that he was a gifted reader of poetry, that he could recite entire passages of Dante by heart. They did not want to discover that he had a remarkably subtle and probing mind. They did not want to be informed that he was an exceptionally decent and kind person. But, then, why should they have made such inquiries? It was easier to make an abstraction of him; it made them feel superior. Of this experience, Levi concludes:

. . . We are the untouchables to the civilians. They think, more or less explicitly—with all the nuances lying between contempt and commiseration—that as we have been condemned to this life of ours, reduced to our condition, we must be tainted by some mysterious, grave sin. They hear us speak in many different languages, which they do not understand and which sound to them as grotesque as animal noises; they see us reduced to ignoble slavery, without hair, without honour and without names, beaten every day, more abject every day, and they never see in our eyes a light of rebellion, or of peace, or of faith. They know us as thieves and untrustworthy, muddy, ragged and starving, and mistaking the effect for the cause, they judge us worthy of our abasement.

And, as an after-thought, he adds: "Who could tell one of our faces from the other? For them we are 'Kazett,' a single neuter word."

I have intended the foregoing material from Levi's book to bracket the "problem," which is an old old one: that men look at one another as strangers and not as brothers, that they do not allow themselves to see

the other as a distinct human being, and in so doing are guilty of what Sartre has called the unforgivable sin—to make the concrete abstract.

Conversely, the author of *If This Is a Man*, unlike the prototypical anti-Semite defined by Sartre, did not fear his responsibilities as a man. The bestial degradation imposed by the German persecutors on the prisoners was resisted by Levi, for whom a fellow-prisoner was not a thing, an object, but, rather, a sentient spirit capable of appreciating the nuances of poetry and philosophy. Thus, the “lesson” that emerges from this personal narrative is the necessity of attempting to remain human even under the press of the most brutalizing conditions. More pointedly, to remain human in the sense intended by Elie Wiesel when, in *From Holocaust to Rebirth*, he relates how Jewish prisoners in Buchenwald conducted themselves on the day of liberation in April 1945.

When the first American jeeps appeared at the gates, there were no outbursts of joy; the inmates did not have the strength left to rejoice. They looked and looked at their liberators; they looked out but they could not see; their eyes still held the image of the 60,000 prisoners taken away the preceding week. Then something happened: a few Russian POW's grabbed some jeeps and machine-guns and raced to Weimar, the neighboring town, and opened fire at will. They needed vengeance before they needed food. And what did the Jewish inmates do to prove they were free? Believe it or not, they held services... To tell Him: listen, as mere mortals, as members of the human society, we know we should seize weapons and use them in every place and in every way and never stop. Because it is our right. But we are Jews and as such we renounce that right; we choose—yes, choose to remain human. And generous.

What is the “lesson” of this story if not the importance of remaining human even in the face of the inhuman? To this question the reader of Holocaust literature must go on responding from ever deeper reaches within his humanity. Such questioning and response is a way, in Elie Wiesel's words, of entering the fiery gates.

*An Ancient and
Modern Identity Crisis:
Lion Feuchtwanger's "Josephus" Trilogy*

MARC LEE RAPHAEL

1872 MARKS THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE publication of the first volume of Lion Feuchtwanger's *Josephus* trilogy and the thirtieth year since the publication of the final volume in the set. The reprinting of the earliest volume, *Josephus*, in paperback this year, provides the opportunity to take another look at three of the finest of Dr. Feuchtwanger's more than a dozen successful (some enormously so) historical novels (*Jew Suess*, *The Oppermanns*, *Raquel*, *Success*, etc.) and one of the best trilogies in all of historical fiction.

Josephus' "Gentile" neighbors accuse him of having a "home elsewhere," a focus of loyalties politically, geographically and, of course, spiritually removed from that nation whose emperors he was applauding. He may have lived in Rome, but Palestine is continually infused into his consciousness and he is transmuted, like a stray animal scenting the herd. No matter where his home, who his friends, how little his knowledge of Jewish observances, he feels Judea's presence in his marrow. And yet, to his enemies (and even his friends) in Palestine, he can not scour himself clean of the suspicion that he is a traitor, a parasite and a "gypsy" who will not strike roots. Nationalism is bad, he tells the doctors at Javneh; at home in Rome he concludes that the alternative to nationalism is, in its own way, equally bad. Is an alternative possible? Or is he doomed to belong everywhere and nowhere at all?

The disguising of contemporary materials in historical fiction is a very old literary technique. For example, in the *Iliad*, Homer was much more interested in the merits of democracy versus dictatorship in his ancient Greece than in the barbaric events which had preceded him by almost half a millenium. And like Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Scott and many other writers of historical fiction have utilized the past as a pretext, not a text, for evaluating ongoing events.

In Feuchtwanger's case, he readily acknowledges his use of historical fiction.¹ While having a Ph.D. in history from the University of Munich (1908) and, therefore, trained to do prodigious research for each of his novels, Feuchtwanger admits to always using the past as his

¹ See his *The House of Desdemona: The Laurels and Limitations of Historical Fiction*.

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vehicle for commentary upon the present. Historical figures who faced problems similar, or even as similar, to his own, thus became subjects of Feuchtwanger's own fiction. The rationale behind this literary technique makes particularly good sense when one considers the times during which he was writing. Caught in the struggle for identity that gripped many German Jews after World War I, Feuchtwanger turned to the ancient Roman world as a way to tell his own story. Here, he discovered Josephus, an authentic historical personality who had himself been caught between two worlds—Jewish and Roman. Consequently, Josephus becomes the hero of Feuchtwanger's own story or that of his contemporaries: coming to terms with themselves as German Jews, Jewish Germans, Jews, Germans, or simply as human beings.

These are the only hints, outside of the novels themselves, which Feuchtwanger provides about the trilogy, so to it we now turn our attention. *Josephus* (1932) introduces us to Joseph (*i.e.*, Josephus) as a Jewish envoy to Rome, a general in Galilee, an aid to Vespasian in Caesarea and Alexandria, and a witness to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. *The Jew of Rome* (1936) presents us with Josephus the writer, the man, the father, the nationalist, and the citizen of the world, while *Josephus and the Emperor* (1942) details the meeting and ensuing struggle between the Emperor Domitian and the Roman Jew Josephus.

History recounts that Joseph ben Matthias, "Doctor of Law" and priest of the Jerusalem Temple, became Flavius Josephus after his people were defeated by Vespasian in Galilee. For Feuchtwanger, this change in name symbolizes the conflict of allegiance between Rome and Jerusalem within his protagonist. There is, however, an external conflict as well. Just as Rome never forgot that Josephus was a Jew, so, too, the Jews never forgave his adoption of Rome.

Thus, we have Josephus, caught between Rome and Jerusalem (and living in the Diaspora), faced with the same type of choice that confronted Feuchtwanger and many of his friends in the Germany of the 1920s and 1930s. They were Jews in the Diaspora seeking full acceptance in a Gentile nation-state, yet no matter how much headway they made into German society, the Germans never forgot that they were Jews; and the more they adopted the German culture, the more they questioned their own existence as Jews. This remains a problem for Josephus and his German successors precisely because they were Jews who never denied their Judaism. "Had he ever denied his faith?" the narrator asks Josephus. And he quickly answers: "He had never denied it" (1932:498).

Josephus, "a Jew by birth but a Roman by choice," anticipates Feuchtwanger's own dilemma: will he choose parochialism and Judaism or Germany and world citizenship? For Josephus, and, one suspects, for Feuchtwanger as well, the road to world citizenship—to evolving

political concepts and personal feelings which would subvert tribalism and nationalism—can be paved only through parochialism:

Yes, he had written the psalm of a citizen of the world, and his ultimate aim was certainly the union of all the nations in the world in one spirit, but so long as that aim was not realized, could a man do better than keep his own racial group together, for no other reason than that it was the only group to acknowledge such an aim? (1936:64).

The Jews, not the Romans, are the nationalists in Feuchtwanger's trilogy, but the unique aspect of their nationalism is its goal of transcending itself. The nationalism of Josephus, Feuchtwanger argues, does not seek to consolidate itself, but, rather, to dissipate itself, for true nationalism is cosmopolitanism. Thus, the Jewish nationalism of Josephus longs to become a part of a united world, a world which accepts Judaism and its faith. Thus, Josephus' parochial attachment to one people is really only a step towards embracing a much larger segment of mankind, for "redemption consisted in the Emperor breaking the shell of Jewish culture to enable that culture to spread over the world and smelt Greece and Judea into one" (1932:287). This is Josephus' messianism, his highest aspiration and his most profound hope—the "triumphant fusion of the East with Rome." And he usually envisions this event in very personal terms, occurring when "the Roman Caesar and the Jewish writer would become one: the first citizens of the world, the first pioneers of a later millenium" (1936:84–5).

Two thousand years later, many of Feuchtwanger's friends were arguing that one could, in fact, reach world citizenship without the parochial (i.e. Jewish) stage. Stefan Zweig, the Austrian Jew, for example, drew upon his vast knowledge of Hellenistic, French and Russian sources in order to praise other peoples and cultures (his biographical studies of such diverse luminaries as Erasmus, Dickens and Vespucci lend evidence to this). At the height of his popularity, Zweig avoided Jewish themes, Jewish characters, and Jewish problems in order to win fame and the approval of literary critics everywhere. Feuchtwanger, however, was critical of this approach. Explicit in his trilogy are warnings to such persons "that there are no other roads towards world citizenship except through the wisdom of the Jews." Feuchtwanger expands this argument in the following passage:

Until a second and more fortunate Daedalus should invent a machine with which men might fly, there would be no way of reaching the top of a mountain save by climbing it and enduring the toil of ascent. But at this time and in this world the mountain one had to climb was: Jewry (1936:329–30).

Interestingly, Zweig proved no exception to Feuchtwanger's argument. No matter how far he ventured from Judaism, both intellectually and culturally, Zweig remained a Jew formally. And, after a personal

tragedy, he even wrote a historical novel (*The Buried Candlelabrum*) affirming his Judaism.

In yet another way the fate of Zweig (and Feuchtwanger) mirrors that of Josephus, for the Germans never forgot that he was a Jew. At the height of his popularity, they burned Zweig's books and offered him exile or death. Jew-German-European: the first two parts became a contradiction, an impossibility. Perhaps, by substituting Roman for German, Feuchtwanger is, in fact, describing Zweig, or those like him, when Josephus mourns for his dead son, Matthias:

Well, there he was now, sitting in the dirt, and he himself was dirt. He, the Western-Eastern, the man of the cosmopolitan Psalm, the man who would be a Roman and a Jew at the same time, the citizen of the world. A fine citizen of the world. If a citizen of the world meant a man who belonged everywhere and nowhere at all, then he surely was one. A cipher. Neither Roman nor Jew. A cipher (1936:282).

Feuchtwanger draws Josephus as a Mr. Facing-Both-Ways, a hero whose life becomes a series of compromises, with family and friends pulling at him from all directions. There are his two wives: Dorion, the half-Greek and half-Egyptian, and Mara, the Jewess; his sons: Paulus, a Graeco-Roman, and Matthias, a Jewish-Roman; and there is the emperor, Titus, pulling him towards Rome, while Justus, the writer, pulls him East.

Even when others cease their tugging for a time, Josephus is still faced with choices. Like his twentieth century counterparts, he always hopes that the choices can be minimized, or, at least, easily reconciled. Worst of all are the decisions which resolve nothing, such as marching under the Arch of Titus in conscious self-abasement if it means saving himself and his people from further humiliation. So "the citizen of the world," well aware that he is losing the respect of the Romans and the Jews, "summoned up his will and made the last step . . . through the arch, above and at either side of him the triumphing goddess of Rome, the triumphal car of the Emperor, the Jews in their fetters of shame" (1936:565).

Josephus, torn between Rome and Judea, can not abandon his "Germany." "Now more than ever he belonged here in Rome. Now, especially after he had written Apion," Josephus reflects. "He felt happy, he could still enjoy it, while he still had the strength to enjoy it" (1942: 303). Initially, he might have rejoined his Jewish wife, Mara, who has lately settled in Palestine. Josephus can not bring himself to leave Rome. However, the decision to stay in Rome (or in Germany, Feuchtwanger writes in 1942) can lead only to tragedy.

Feuchtwanger actually seems to have in mind the German Jews who, by choice, would not get out. Rome often resembles imperial, ante-bellum Berlin and Josephus, alternately, a German-Jewish general (of-

ten, a Jewish war veteran who hastens to assure Domitian [Hitler?] of his complete loyalty when the latter becomes emperor [Chancellor?]), statesman, artist, or publicist who placed his trust in the Fatherland (Feuchtwanger uses this term twice to describe Rome), thereby serving the power that was ultimately to destroy him.

Perhaps one could never be both Jew and world citizen; maybe this is to demand the impossible. The Judean princess, Berenice, feels this way and admits so to Josephus:

We wanted to be Greeks, you and I, and yet to be Jews, too, and it can't be done. Jehovah won't allow it. We wanted too much, we were insolent. That's the only sin which the Greek gods punish just as Jehovah does, the sin of insolence, *hybris*, and we have committed it . . . (1936:165).

Attempting to live in two worlds may lead one to believe that world citizenship means no citizenship: moreover, with both worlds simultaneously tearing one apart, it may also lead to the inability to express oneself as either Jew or world-citizen. Hence Josephus' envy for Mara:

"Land of Israel," she said in Aramaic. Joseph understood her, and he envied her. He had his citizenship of the world, but he was split apart. She, on the other hand, was all one. She was rooted in the earth of Judea, she belonged to Judea, under the sky of Judea and with its people, and Joseph knew that when many times she had urged him in her quiet way to return there she had been right and he had been wrong to refuse it to her (1942:21).

In *Josephus*, the main character is torn between Jewish nationalism and Graeco-Roman cosmopolitanism. He finally chooses the latter, symbolized by Joseph's transformation from the Priest Joseph ben Matthias into the writer Flavius Josephus, from a citizen of Judea into a citizen of the world.

In *The Jew of Rome*, Josephus sees Rome differently. Consequently, he turns to Jewish nationalism as the key step towards world citizenship. But this return to his land and people is short-lived, for Josephus sees the Jewish sages limiting their people by ritual, thereby preventing a world order capable of transcending pure nationalism. The citizen of the world, when confronted with the demands of a rigorous Jewish life, complains that "with their [Jewish sages'] one authorized version of the truth they're taking the wide world out of the Scripture and putting in a stupid, megalomaniac, trumpery little nation. If Jehovah isn't the God of the whole world, what is He?" And the obvious answer is most disappointing: "a mere national God" (1936:372). Thus, Josephus finds, upon his return to Judea, a spiritual Jerusalem more cramped and arrogant than the physical Jerusalem which had been destroyed.

In *Josephus and the Emperor*, Josephus continues his quest for a synthesis between Yahweh and the classic Pantheon, but his heart beats more strongly with the fanaticism of Jewish die-hards in successive re-

volts. Even so, his faith and trust in Rome as the vehicle for his messianic ideal of world citizenship are too strong to allow him to leave Rome in time to prevent tragedy and to share his last years with Mara. Only when Domitian dies, and with him all Josephus' hopes as well, does he return to Judea.

After following Josephus for 1,500 pages and three books, Feuchtwanger concludes: "The land came to get him, and he sought it. He had sought the world, but he had found only his land; for he had sought the world too soon" (1942:445).

Thus, Feuchtwanger forces us to consider two crucial questions: Can one be wholeheartedly universalistic without destroying his own particularism? Feuchtwanger would have us believe that one can not. Moreover, must the Jewish people yield their universalism if they wish to see themselves as God's vehicle for becoming the order for all humanity? Feuchtwanger would have us believe that they must. For him, then, the compatibility of Israel with what he calls "an all-encompassing globalism" is impossible—one or the other must be sacrificed. Perhaps, according to Feuchtwanger, Josephus sought this synthesis "too soon"; but, some 2,000 years later, we are still in the process of seeking it.

The Absent God

HAROLD FISCH

With shirt wide open, like the open temple gates,
With the toes of my feet I will caress the earth of morning.
Here will I stretch out supine, I will lie in mother's lap.
And all the rivers will come to me,
And every tree will strike its roots in me,
And the God of all the world will nestle close to me whispering
with love—You! You!

Abraham Shlonsky, *Jezreel*¹

MODERN HEBREW POETRY MOVES STRANGELY between the poles of messianic hope and metaphysical despair. The former is emphatically present even in the most secular writings. At the beginning of the modern period, Saul Tchernichovsky, in spite of a self-conscious paganism and an ostentatious rejection of the Jewish tradition, ends a sonnet entitled "The Three Asses" with a vivid image of the white ass on which the Messiah will speedily come riding. And later, Yonatan Ratosh, the professed Canaanite for whom Jewish history has already, so to say, come to an end, nevertheless testifies in a lyric of astonishing power to the dream which subdues us today as it subdued Balaam in olden time. What the dream is he does not say, but the Biblical imagery he uses evokes both the vocabulary and the syntax of the rejected faith. In the extract quoted above, Shlonsky, the "worker's poet" of a new socialist religion, finds in the contact with the earth of the homeland the source of an ecstasy for which the only appropriate metaphors are the gates of the temple opened to receive the God of all the world. Elsewhere in the same poem the skies put on the sun like a great phylactery as God sows the seed of vision in the soil of Jezreel.²

A curious circumstance in the imagery of the Shlonsky poem is the masculine character of the *haluz* figure who lies supine with shirt wide open whilst God approaches him amorously in an unmistakably female gesture. The verb *mitrapek* here, translated "nestles close," is taken from *The Song of Songs* 8:5, where it refers to the Shulammitte leaning on her lover, a verse traditionally applied to the Jewish people leaning on its divine Lord. The male ending is of less importance than the inescapable female suggestion of the verb itself. There is, in short, an inverted geometry of relationships here. No longer does the "daughter of Zion" follow her lover into the wilderness or come out of the wilderness leaning on

1. Ruth Finer Mintz, ed. and tr., *Modern Hebrew Poetry: A Bilingual Anthology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U. of California Press, 1966), p. 176.

2. S. Halkin, *Modern Hebrew Literature* (New York: Schocken Books, 1950), p. 204.

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her beloved. Instead, a female deity “nestles up” to her erring son/lover. This situation gives to the male protagonist of Shlonsky’s poem a new sense of power, and this is in line with the phenomenon noted by Robert Alter, who points out that the men of the second Aliyah tended, in their rhetoric, to substitute Man for God.³ “To whom is praise due, and to whom do we give thanks?” asks Bialik in a poem which became a kind of hymn for the new *ḥaluzic* generation; and the answer is, not the God of tradition, but “Work and Toil.”

But this very same phenomenon which could yield a new sense of power could also yield a new sense of helplessness, a radical despair, as the “new man” discovered that he no longer had a “Rock” to support him. This is the situation in Bialik’s famous poem “I Alone.”⁴ Here we have, not a *ḥaluz* but a student, suffering the stresses of the Enlightenment. His friends have been “swept away by the wind and the light”—the wind of Emancipation and the light of Rationalism—whilst he hides himself in a corner of the *Bet Hamidrash*,—the House of Study—beneath “the wings of the *Shekhinah*.” The *Shekhinah*—the female aspect of divinity in the Rabbinic and Kabbalistic literature—“leans on me” in the precise language of *The Song of Songs* 8:5, as in Shlonsky’s above-quoted poem. Her wing is broken and, more than she protects the forlorn student, she seems to require his protection. The poet vainly seeks to comfort her as she buries her head on his shoulder and her “scalding tear” falls on the folio he is studying. Adi Zemach, in his commentary on this poem, perceptively remarks that the *Shekhinah* is sorrowing for the lost male deity, the *Kudshah berikh hu* of the Kabbalists without whose masculine authority the *Shekhinah* could have no true independent existence.⁵ This will explain why God is so helpless in the face of the new forces of the Enlightenment which Bialik seeks to confront in this poem. He is unable to save because He is no longer He. There is a certain comfort, a certain satisfaction of romantic sentiment in this languid flirtation with the *Shekhinah* in the corner of the *Bet Hamidrash*, but there is no promise of active help nor any possibility of such a promise.

The loss of the male deity, which is perhaps the fundamental event in the poetry of the Enlightenment—an event for which Nietzsche may have been collaterally responsible—is closely bound up with another recurrent motif with which every reader of Hebrew Literature from the mid-nineteenth century onward is familiar, namely, the motif of the dead or absent father. Fathers did go away from home for long periods in eastern Europe (Agnon’s tales are full of such journeys), and many fathers also died. It is surprising how many Hebrew poets, at the turn of the century, actually lost their fathers in early life. Bialik lost his at the

3. Robert Alter, *After the Tradition* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1969), p. 220.

4. This poem is reproduced in Burnshaw, Carmi and Spicehandler, eds., *The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 27.

5. *The Hidden Lion* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem, 1966), p. 175.

age of seven. His poetry is, in a special sense, a poetry of orphanhood, and Adi Zemach points out that the figure of the broken-hearted *Shekhinah* in "I Alone" was probably suggested to the poet by the sight of his own bereaved mother.⁶ He reverts to his father's death and her bereavement in a passionate elegy, written at the very end of his life, long after the event:

Vacant stands my father's chair, dishonored the seat of glory;
Empty upon it the pouch of the tallit, crumpled and defiled;
His prayer-book closed for ever, its pages widowed.
Widowed, too, the great bookcase, all its tenants orphaned in their pens.
No hand will now visit them, no finger touch their parchment.
Thus the widowed mother lay prostrate and confused seven days;
On the eighth day she shook herself and went forth to her destined lot.⁷

The archetype recurs in J. L. Peretz, in Shin Shalom and, more recently, in Yehuda Amichai, who constantly returns in elegy to the image of his father who had fought in the Army of the German emperor in the First World War. The poet is no longer capable of being consoled by the simplicities and the crumbs of comfort (central to one lyric is the image of the crumbling cake which his mother had lovingly wrapped for his father to take in his knapsack to the Front) that had sustained his father and that his father had vainly sought to bequeath to his son. In his novel, *Not of this Time, Not of this Place*,⁸ Amichai's protagonist is attached to his ancestral faith through his annual visit to the Synagogue where he says kaddish for his dead father. The symbolism is clear. In another well known poem of love and lament, the same poet addresses his beloved with the sad phrase, "Both of us together, and each of us alone." The phrase, taken from the form of legal contract, attaches to itself the pathos of lovers in the latter half of the twentieth century, finding only partial comfort in one another for their existential loneliness. But the key to their loneliness is provided in the haunting second half of the stanza, parodying a popular song:

The swings go round and round
But daddy has not come to the fair.⁹

The orphaned poet becomes an image for an orphaned generation, a fatherless world where all that is left is (as Blake might say) the shadowy emanation of divinity, the female form glimpsed as helpless girl, bride, or mother.

II

It is against this background of orphanhood or widowhood that we may—paradoxically—locate the love of Zion in modern literature. For

6. *Ibid.*

7. "Shiv'a" (dated 1933). Translated by H. Fisch.

8. (New York: Harper and Row, 1968). Hebrew, 1963.

9. This poem first appeared in 1955. Extracts translated by H. Fisch.

Zion is a kind of widowed mother, too. That is how she appears in the Shlonsky poem cited above. The poet, lying supine on the earth of the homeland, imagines himself "in mother's lap." It is a characteristic posture. Any father-figure is conspicuously absent. This is also how Zion appears in an astonishing poem of Matityahu Shoham, a slightly younger contemporary of Shlonsky. He describes himself "returning" to Jerusalem on a first visit. Jerusalem and, by extension, the whole Land of Israel, is both bride and mother and to her he returns in love and hope, seeking in her embrace a cure for his intolerable metaphysical loneliness.¹⁰ "O, mother of mine, sick and bereft," cries Shoham,

That you would recognize me, that you would spread out over me
your mourning wing!
Be joined fast to me—in the trembling clasp of a first love,
And silently let us take our fill of embraces,
And let us listen to the blessing breathed by deserted hills
and valleys.¹¹

Shoham apologizes for arriving at the Holy City with a group of camera-toting tourists. But "the mother who hears my heart beat under my starched shirt" will understand. She will understand him and receive him in her arms, for his is the true lover's return. Shoham, we may note, lost his father at the age of four. Here we have the geographical transposition of the theme of orphanhood and widowhood, the alienated lonely son seeking spiritual solace in the widowed land from which the male director of Jewish history is notably absent.

To say that the love of Zion as mother or bride is a central motif in modern Hebrew literature is an understatement; it would be truer to say that it is the main power of modern Jewish history. Only by evoking the full erotic and passional implications of such imagery can we understand the fury of the young "lovers of Zion," who, in the eighties of the last century, faced all privations in their endeavor to make the desert fertile. The whole vocabulary of modern Zionism is a sexual vocabulary, the imagery of wooing and of the marriage covenant the only possible language available for explicating it. The young idealists, often deceptively hard-bitten in appearance and using the contemporary idiom of dialectical materialism, were, in fact, no other than the heroes of a courtly romance, knights on a journey to the Holy Land, come to seek the favor of their mistress. And their mistress was none other than the sleeping beauty of that fairy-tale which is Jewish history, the lady of the lake ("My Kinneret"), the imprisoned daughter of the king ("the king's daughter is all glorious within" except that her father is dead) who would be re-

10. For some acute remarks on the love of the Land of Israel as a cure for metaphysical loneliness at this time, cf., Aryeh L. Strauss, *Studies in Literature* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1959), p. 121.

11. M. Shoham, *Ketavim* [Hebrew], (Jerusalem, 1964). p. 362. Translated by H. Fisch. It is a poem of the thirties.

leased from her spell and from her enchantment only by the kiss of her destined spouse, namely, the People of Israel. Behind the surge and fury of the conquerors of the Holy City in June 1967 is a lover's passion made the more intense because Israel has been seeking the estranged bride of her youth these twenty centuries. In June, 1967, she was miraculously restored. A consummation devoutly to be wished and never to be relinquished, as Mr. Dayan vowed at that scene of passionate reunion on the third day of the June War. Israel will lodge—in Biblical language—between the breasts of his beloved. This phrase from *The Song of Songs* 1:13, had been attached by the Jewish commentators to the twin poles of the ark of the covenant, protruding as they did through the screen of the sanctuary within the Temple at Jerusalem. Between them God would dwell. Persons and genders have become mixed, but the passionate avowal remains. It is a central theme in modern Jewish history. In fact, it is *the* central theme. Take it away and the world becomes for the Jew, as Emily Brontë would have said, a mighty stranger.

Two love poems of Zion by the more unsophisticated (indeed, traditionally "Jewish") poets of the Return may be quoted for their powerful erotic force. Thus, Yehuda Karni:

Wedge me into the fissure with each fallen stone.
 Hammer me till I grow strong.
 Perhaps I shall appease my land and atone
 For the people's sin: the ruins unmended so long.

and he ends

With the stones of Jerusalem wedge me into the wall.
 Clothe me in mortar, and from
 The very depths of the stones my bones shall call
 'Til the Messiah come.¹²

Here the messianic longing shines clearly through the sexual language. Y. Fichman, with equal passion, and with the same transparent imagery of the coupling of man with earth and stones and trees, declares:

By green of your earth I swear and by your sunlight.
 I inherit the desolation that remains.
 I stand like a tree in stone, by you held spellbound—
 Soul woven with soul, my root in your dry veins.¹³

Except for the metaphysical ache noticeable in all this writing, we might suppose that there was simply a late nineteenth-century mystique of nationalism, as in Mazzini, or the poetry of the Celtic twilight, or a Hebraic version of the sex-mystique of D. H. Lawrence, the heavy passionate life of man beating in time with that of animals and the veins of the earth, as in the opening paragraphs of *The Rainbow*. But such an

12. S. Y. Penueli and U. Ukhmani, eds., *Anthology of Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1966), I, 130. The translation is by Dom Moraes.

13. *Ibid.*, I, 105. Translated by Robert Friend.

analogy is false. The Hebrew writers are not fundamentally concerned with the *libido*. Y. H. Brenner, who identifies the unrest of his generation as a "sex-neurosis," is self-deceived.¹⁴ Theirs is truly a metaphysical ache, an alienation of the spirit. It is a deeper loneliness than that felt by Lawrence's heroes, which these poets seek to assuage through contact with the soil of the Homeland. It is a loneliness brought about through the death of that Father who stands behind the individual father of the individual lonely orphan. The Nietzschean inversion of the cosmos has bitten deeply into their souls. It is no accident that the spiritual mentor of the early Zionists was Ahad Ha-am, an avowed Nietzschean for whom Judaism had become an ethical system, a great culture, but for whom the personal God was no longer there. It is said of the "Guardian of Israel" that He neither slumbers nor sleeps. He not merely sleeps at the end of the nineteenth century; He is absent entirely, and in the sad emptiness left by His absence the love-hungry seeker embraces the soil of the Homeland, the abandoned widow and bride of Jewish history, the *Shekhinah* with broken wing.

III

How, it will be asked, can this be termed alienation? What has the passionate love of Zion to do with metaphysical loneliness? Surely the erotic imagery we have been discussing is, at bottom, Biblical, rather than the product of nineteenth century transvaluation. Here, for instance, in Isaiah, we have Zion as earth, mother, and bride:

Thou shalt be called Hefzi-bah (My delight is in her)
 And the Land Beulah (Espoused).
 For the Lord delights in thee, and thy land shall be espoused.
 For as a young man takes to himself a virgin,
 So shall thy sons take thee to themselves.
 And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
 So shall thy God rejoice over thee. (Isaiah, 62:4-5.)

And, later, in that same prophet, the same unabashed sexual language:

Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all her lovers.
 Rejoice with her all those who had mourned with her,
 That you may suck and be satisfied with the breast of her consolations
 (66:10-11).

The conjunction at this level of love for mother with love of bridegroom for bride will not surprise anyone. Here we have the lover's instinct displayed at the passionate depths, at the undifferentiated level of primary feelings with nothing alienated or distorted about it. The lover who embraces his long-estranged bride and the child who sucks contentedly at

14. Hillel Halkin tr., *Breakdown and Bereavement* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 142, 210.

his mother's breast are one and the same person, Zion being, as we would expect, both wife and mother. And here is the authentic Biblical source, it would seem, for the Zionist love poetry of Fichman, Karni, Bialik, Shoham, Shlonsky and so many others. They are operating within a classical tradition. This, however, is not quite so.

In the Biblical sources, the love of Israel for Zion was never a bipolar affair. It was, rather, as it always has been, a very complex but, nonetheless, unmistakable triangle. The land can only be viewed as bride because God has said "my delight is in her." She can be called "Espoused" only because God has espoused her. The people of Israel partake in this *hieros gamos*, this divine union, because God has admitted us to it. Israel's part in the drama is bisexual. In conjunction with Zion, we are the "baal," the lord and bridegroom; but in conjunction with God we are the female, the helpless and dependent bride. The full experience of covenant involves both roles. The prophet Zechariah thus identifies Israel as the feminine partner of the covenant:

Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for, lo, I come and will dwell
In the midst of thee, says the Lord (2:10).

Likewise, Jeremiah:

Thus says the Lord; I remember in thy favor the devotion of thy youth,
Thy love as a bride, when thou didst go after me into the wilderness,
In a land that was not sown (2:2).

It is Israel with whom God dwells; Israel is here the sleeping beauty of Jewish history awaiting the kiss of the destined spouse. How, then, for Isaiah, can the Land of Israel perform that selfsame feminine role? The answer is clearly that the words "Zion" and "Jerusalem" are profoundly ambiguous; they refer to both people and land. God, in joining Himself to Zion, is, in reality, joining Himself to Israel. The redemption of the land, a seemingly biological or agricultural phenomenon, is, in fact, a spiritual, psychic phenomenon—the awakening of the beloved under the apple tree. The fearful poverty and anguish of spirit which mark the history of modern Zionism may thus be interpreted as a kind of exegetical lapse. The rich ambiguity of the Biblical image has been lost and Zion and Jerusalem denuded of their metaphorical connotations, their literary complexity. The spiritual awakening of Israel—the essential middle term in the relationship—is missing.

And since Zionism is, at bottom, an affair of poetry, dependent on vision, an exegetical lapse of this kind can be disastrous. When Israel forgets her feminine role in the *hieros gamos*, preempting for herself an exclusive male privilege in lordship over the land of promise, at the same time excluding the more overriding and inclusive action of the male deity, the danger is that she may find herself embracing a stone. Once the triangular structure of relationships is abandoned, the union of man and earth is no

longer as stable and satisfying as it seemed. It may do for a Pole or an Italian, and it may do for D. H. Lawrence, but it will evidently not do for the Jew. For who will now take responsibility for the onward progress of Jewish history? In the moment of passionate embrace, the lover of Zion is stricken with metaphysical loneliness. This is the situation of the contemporary Israeli writer, of Amos Oz, of Yehuda Amichai, as it is the situation of modern Israeli man. Paradoxically, it did not beset in like degree the Zion lovers of the Middle Ages, who were rarely privileged, like their modern successors, to embrace the dust and stones of Jerusalem. For Judah Halevi, Ibn Gabirol and the authors of the medieval odes to Zion, Zion is Zion because she is the throne of God. In one such love poem, R. Abraham Hozeh (twelfth century) declares of Zion, "In thee God dwelt alone, none beside Him," and he ends up by saying,

Return to God thy husband,
Give Him no rest till His glory return.

Or else we have R. Elazar HaDarshan (thirteenth century), who likewise places the male deity in the center of the love relationship—

Thou art she to whose gardens he daily resorted.
There are the table and the candlestick,
And there the ark of the covenant.
God, between the breasts of love,
Nightly dwells in thy lodgings.¹⁵

The recurrent imagery of *The Song of Songs* is here used in celebration of the mystic marriage between God and Zion for which the poet yearns. Nor should it be thought that this is some kind of higher voyeurism. The poet is not looking on; he is involved, because Israel is involved. For Israel is that daughter of Zion to whom God joins Himself when He causes His glory to return and dwell between the breasts of His beloved. God, too, does not embrace a stone. He embraces not a land simply, but a living People dwelling in a land. And the land herself responds to the touch of its divine lover only when its People is rejoined to it in love.

It is this dynamic of mutual relationships which modern Zionist poetry lacks. Or, rather, it is to this that it dumbly points, rarely finding words in which to articulate the missing term in the syllogism. Amichai comes near it in the light and melancholy love lyric which we quoted earlier:

Both of us together, and each of us alone. . .
For daddy has not come to the fair.

It is this sense of being alone and orphaned which accounts for the anti-Zionist reflex of the more recent poets and prose writers, for whom the Return has revealed an inner core of bitterness and sterility. Metaphysical loneliness is at the heart of the whole enterprise; it produces the despair—

¹⁵. Both poems cited here are part of the collection of laments customarily read on the ninth of Av.

ing countertheme to Emancipation in Bialik, the vivid messianism of Ratosh and Shlonsky, and the newer iconoclasm of Amos Oz and A. B. Yehoshua. All are caught in the same tragic dilemma which we have here sought to analyze.

IV

The most tragic and radical statement of metaphysical loneliness, as well as the most determined confrontation with its cause and remedy, are to be found in the highly complex modern Hebrew poet, Shin Shalom, whose poetry represents, it has been said, "the inversion of world and values, the meeting with the Nothing, and, in consequence, the deification of the I as God-Man."¹⁶ This would make him a figure perhaps like Blake, for whom transcendence has disappeared and for whom dialogue is no longer possible, as God is absorbed in the Divine Humanity. But such a supposition would not do justice to the tensions and struggles which take place within the work of Shin Shalom and which are owed precisely to the strength and tenacity with which he confronts the challenge of history. Shalom cannot hide from history in the depths of his selfhood, for in history the I does not meet the Myself: it meets mighty and inexorable events over which the I has no control.

It is precisely in wrestling with the imperatives and agonies of Jewish history that Shin Shalom recognizes that he has come to the end of the egocentric road. If we are alone, then what are we running from and what are we running towards? Why the sweat, the toil, and the tears? And why Zion? Love and devotion may no longer be possible as we embrace a stone or the shadow of a stone, but whence the ache and whence the emptiness? What pulls the lonely unbeliever to the Wall of the Temple-Mount? Shalom is too honest a writer to nourish himself with the time-worn clichés of secular Zionism—"a territorial solution of the Jewish problem," "a Peopleless land for a landless people," "autoemancipation" and the like. These do not explain the lover's passion and the lover's frustration. On the other hand, his crisis is too radical to permit a simple Kierkegaardian leap into faith, a *credo quia absurdum est*. Instead, he struggles with the classical terms of the covenant: God, Man, and Land, and with the fundamental terms of Jewish history: Exile and Return, Past and Future. He strives to wrest a meaning out of these irreducible factors of Jewish experience and he does so in a poem set in a biographical frame and bearing the strange title of *On Ben Peleh*, "Strength, Son of Wonder" (1940).

The choice of this Biblical title suggests that the ultimate posture is one of wonder rather than of frustration. There is a mystery at the depths

16. B. Kurzweil, "Shin Shalom's Explorations in the Depths of the I," prefixed to Shin Shalom, *On Ben Peleh*, tr. V. E. Reichert and Moses Zalesky (Jerusalem: Youth and Hehalutz Dept. of the Zionist Organization, 1963), p. 20.

of the I, but there is, equally, a mystery at the depths of the People and of the land to which the People is moved to return.

I knocked at your gates, O Jerusalem
 At midnight, at your Western Wall.
 Eyes stared at me from the Temple Mount.
 Were they God's or an Arab's eyes?
 I climbed dead stairs, Upon the wall
 Footsteps are swallowed in the path of the moon.
 Who is it paces at my heels a-tremble?
 Orphaned here the Shekhinah mourns. (III, I)¹⁷

The same figure of the mourning Shekhinah whom Bialik had met in the corner of the Bet Hamidrash is here eerily transported to the Temple Mount, and the poet is struck with a sense of oddness and mystery. Is the place empty or is there someone else there? Who is that third who walks always beside him? In any poetry relating to the Western Wall, the imagery of *The Song of Songs* 2:9 may always be assumed to be present, at least as suppressed metaphor: "Behold he stands behind our Wall. He looks in at the windows, he peers through the lattice." But does God peer out of the lattice, or is it an Arab? Sometimes Shalom is overcome with the sense of an overwhelming presence to whom he can respond, and who responds to him in love.

For you, O Jerusalem, have reawakened
 My longing which does not fade.
 The world about sees only with the eye.
 But you perceive the sorrow of the heart. (III, 3)

And, at other times, it seems to him that the return to his ancient origins is a return to the grave, to death itself:

I go to myself, to an ancient land,
 I return to my past that is dead.
 I understand that all is in slumber,
 Yet I know that all is truth.
 Somewhere they put my body in a grave,
 Dust covered me and bones of the dead.
 Yet my longings tell me, "Great is the hope,
 I am ascending the Olive slope." (III, 10)

In the most horrifying episode of all, the narrator appears as a gravedigger on the Mount of Olives. He is burying the pioneers, the Talmud students, the prophets, those torn by holy joy. All the lovers and seekers of Zion are descending into the grave. And he, too, the gravedigger, is maddened and doomed by the same frustrated search.

With hidden scorn the passersby stare
 At my torn garments and my bedraggled beard.

17. *On Ben Peleh*, ed. cit., p. 70. The first six extracts cited in the following paragraphs are from the translation of Reichert and Zalesky; the last six extracts are adapted by H. Fisch. References in parentheses are to the poet's own chapter and stanza divisions.

Once I had a beloved, her name was Zion.
Endlessly I pursue her shadow through the streets. (IV, 12)

He finally hides himself, like Elijah, in a cave, and a pious woman brings him his daily bread. Until finally, in his wanderings, he approaches the open window of a hospital and sees within the shrouded figure of a woman. It is the object of his search—"It is she"—the beloved who, alone, could have cured his intolerable loneliness.

It is not good for man to be alone.
Dread strangles—how long can I be silent?
I sink in the abyss and stretch my hand out to you. (IV, 17)

At first he recognizes in the dead figure the woman with whom, in his travels, he had vainly sought comfort and intimacy. But he finally identifies her with the ultimate object of all his tormented yearning, with the lodestone of Jewish historical experience, *viz.*, Zion herself;

Silent, I waited. Her ear was deaf.
She lay as if asleep under the cover of the sheet.
I lifted it gently. Naked she lay,
And I passed my hand over her delicate skin.
"Speak," I implored, "say but one word.
For you are Zion, yet seem so murderous?
My life burns away here, and I entreat."
She gave me no answer, no movement, no stir. (IV, 18)

In the vision of the seemingly dead body of Zion, the poet has reached the lowest point of horror and hopelessness. From now on there will be a slow, difficult and hesitant attempt to transcend the egocentered existence and to reconstruct the elements of dialogue, so that God, Land, and people can function in some kind of mutuality. The remainder of the poem is now conducted in a quieter, more thoughtful, fashion.

I shall yet rebuild you, and you shall be rebuilt, O Jerusalem, my city.
I shall yet join my shoulders to the toilers on the wall.
Perish my path if my song betrays you!
From out of all silences my soul longs for you!

Much have I sickened in your foul air.
The days were wounds, horror the nights,
Let me go to seek some healing for my heart.
You shall yet be rebuilt, but not today, not now. (IV, 21)

He moves about the country saddened, but also impressed, by the toil and the sacrifice of the new Jewish settlers in the Emek Jezreel, by "the pang of creation, the inhuman pain." Working with the new settlers on the Land, he is content with his lowly lot. He is, he says, "like a stone of the field at the edge of the path." And he hears the growth of the grain at the coming of spring. The earth is alive for him, and he feels himself knit to it in what can only be described as the bonds of love. And now, amid the dark toil and suffering, a child is brought to birth, the new Jew. The poet is not the father but, nevertheless, the new birth gives him joy;

What am I, my life, my People, my land?
In my expanses, infinity's horsemen run wild!

Who battles with whom? It is I with myself!
The sea with the waves, the there with the here. (VI, 8)

With all the force of his will he clutches once again at the "scarlet thread" of the vision that has been revealed to him:—

I grasp at Being like a scarlet thread
Whilst the shadow of negation threatens with his hand. (VI, 8)

He ends with a prayer, one wrung out of the heart of Jewish secularism, but pointing, nevertheless, unerringly to that master of our Jewish fate Who shrouds Himself in the mystery of time and being and beckons us towards the future:

Great Magician of my depths, increase your forces!
My heart was sharpened on the stone of despair.
The torch I hold shall neither fall nor fade.
Mine is the battle of the God hidden in life
I sought to bind infinity with my hands
To hold it in a clod of earth, in the handful of native soil lying near.
I sought to dress in garments like any man
Whilst in my veins the scorching fire of wonder burned.
Come to me, stand with me! From far horizons
Let the light be brought to pierce the darkness.
My brother, O my brother of the distant generations .
To you I cry out from the bosom of the dark. (VI, 8)

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Frantz Fanon as a Zionist

NORMAN LEVINE

THE LATE 1960's WAS A PERIOD IN WHICH THE word "revolution" was on everybody's lips. It was the height of the Vietnam protest, the height of the student protest, the height of the black protest, the height of the Palestinian guerrilla movement, and there were memories still alive of the heroism and fervor of the Chinese, Algerian and Cuban revolutions. In America, during this period, Frantz Fanon was looked upon as the most articulate spokesman of the frustration and the rage of the suppressed throughout the world.

Fanon was born in Martinique in 1925. He studied medicine in France, specializing in psychiatry. When the Algerian Revolution was evolving, he was sent to a hospital in Algeria, where his sympathies turned toward the rebels. In 1952, he became the editor of *El Moudjahid*, the official underground newspaper of the Algerian National Liberation Front, and was an active force for Algerian decolonization. He held that post until 1961 when he became ill. He died of cancer in December of that year in the United States.

After his death, Fanon's books became the bibles of radical dissenters. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, *A Dying Colonialism*, and *Toward the African Revolution*, Fanon described the psychological state of the Algerian or the African under a colonial system. His words, thus, carried great relevance for the American Black. His major work, however, was *The Wretched of the Earth*, a book which was read and quoted by Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale, Angela Davis, George Habash and Amir Arafat. In the pages of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon established himself as the leading diagnostician of the colonized mentality and as a prophet of violence, a violence that cleansed, a violence that resurrected, a decolonizing violence which recaptured dignity for the black man. He was the Marx of Pan-Africanism, a mode in the evolution of black consciousness. What was not recognized, however, was that Fanon wrote almost as much for the Jew as he did for the African.

The writings of Fanon amply demonstrate that, although he thought the black colonial experience unique, he did not think it the only colonial experience. A parallel existed between Jew and Negro. They both were colonized people. Racism had been their common predicament, their common destiny. Fanon saw Zionism as essentially a Third World movement; that is, as a victorious national revolution through which a nation was decolonized, through which it claimed its own cultural identity within a sovereign territorial framework.

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Fanon's appreciation of Jewish decolonization will be discussed under four categories: (1) the ontology of colonialism; (2) differential racism; (3) Al Fatah; and (4) the testimony of silence.

The Ontology of Colonialism

The French philosophical tradition, particularly that of Sartre, helped shape Fanon. It was French existentialism which gave to this Algerian revolutionary the philosophic basis of his ideas. In *Anti-Semite and Jew*, *Saint Genet*, and *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre had explored the condition of human existence when it was totally dominated by the other. Fanon was to borrow the Sartrian paradigm but added to it a racial black-white content. The fact that this Algerian nationalist, who saw violence as the only means of ridding Algeria of French colonialism, was himself heavily indebted to French thought, clearly shows that Fanon never totally separated himself from his western cultural heritage. He wanted to free Africa, but not to insulate it totally from western ideas.

The world of anti-Semitism was, for Sartre, a Manichaean one, divided between good and evil. That is, it was a world of absolute polarization. On one side stood the external world, the anti-Semitic one. On the other side stood the Jew. The Jew was, thus, a dominated man.

The Jew is one whom other men consider a Jew: that is the simple truth from which we must start. In this sense the democrat is right as against the anti-Semite, for it is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew.¹

In a Manichaean universe the Jew was totally dominated by a hostile society. He became the object of society. The image of the Jew which the external world made for itself was imposed on the Jew as his self-image. When the Jew incorporated the image which society had of him as his own personality, the external became the internal. This was exactly the psychological mechanism which Fanon later described as forming the basis of white-black colonialism.

The Manichaean world of Sartre was unyielding and unrepentant; it was final. No reciprocity, no interchange existed between the external world and the self. The anti-Semitic external world confronted the self, and the self was overcome. There was no exit.²

Fanon's model of racist colonialism was borrowed from Sartre's model of oppression.³ Since this model of oppression was applied to the Jew, Fanon, in accepting it, also accepted the fact that the Jew had

1. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Anti-Semite and Jew*, translated by George J. Becker (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 69.

2. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet*, translated by Bernard Frechtman (New York: New American Library, 1963), p. 34.

For Sartre's view on the Arab-Israeli conflict see *Acid*, November 21, 1969, pp. 4A-5A.

3. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles Lam Markman (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 220.

been victimized by white, Christian colonialism. He acknowledged that the Jew had been a colonized people in Europe. He also accepted the fact that anti-Semitic colonialism and white-black colonialism were analogous in form, although their contents must be differentiated.

In his book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon offered his best analysis of the psychology of colonialism. Thoroughly Sartrian, Fanon only added the modality of skin pigmentation.

The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man. Overnight the Negro has been given two frames of reference within which he has had to place himself. His metaphysics, or less pretentiously, his customs and the sources on which they are based, were wiped out because they were in conflict with a civilization that he did not know and that imposed itself on him.⁴

The black-white colonial world was a Manichaen one, just as it was for the Jew. Because of the absolutist domination of white society, the black was deracialized and inferiorized. He became the object of the white, that is, the white stereotype of the black was incorporated by the black as constituting his own ego. Blackness, for the white, had always been synonymous with sexuality, and, thus, the black had experienced himself as a sexual gargantuan. This was a process of de-ontologizing.

Fanon repeated this theme throughout his works. "I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the 'idea' that others have of me but of my own appearance."⁵ Such was the essence of colonialism: the totalitarian domination of the exterior. The black had no self: the exterior functioned in him as self.

Differential Racism

Fanon thought of the Jew as a "brother." African and Jew were the same, in that both had experienced the same racist, colonial oppression. Ample evidence of this fellowship, this identical national experience, emerged in his writing. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he says:

Colonial racism is no different from any other racism. Anti-Semitism hits me head-on: I am enraged, I am bled white by an appalling battle, I am deprived of the possibility of being a man. I cannot disassociate myself from the future that is proposed for my brother. Every one of my acts commits me as a man. Every one of my silences, every one of my cowardices reveals me as a man.⁶

A few pages later in the same work, he adds:

An outrage!

The Jew and I: Since I was not satisfied to be racialized, I was humanized. I joined the Jew, my brother in misery. . .

4. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

Later I realized that he meant, quite simply, an anti-Semite is inevitably anti-Negro.⁷

Not only had the Jews been a colonized people, but they were also the victims of a colonial system which equalled the barbarism of South Africa and Algeria. In *Toward the African Revolution*, Fanon was in agreement with his friend, Aimé Césaire:

One is inevitably reminded of this passage from the past, Césaire: "What he (the twentieth century bourgeois humanist) does not forgive Hitler is not the crime itself, the crime against the white man, it is the inflicting on Europeans of European colonialist procedures which until now were reserved for the Arabs of Algeria, the coolies of India, and the Negroes of Africa."⁸

Fanon reiterated the same theme—Naziism as intra-European colonialization—in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

I feel that I can still hear Césaire: "When I turn on my radio, when I hear that Negroes have been lynched in America, I say that we have been lied to: Hitler is not dead; when I turn on my radio, when I hear that Jews have been insulted, mistreated, persecuted, I say that we have been lied to: Hitler is not dead; when, finally, I turn on my radio and hear that in Africa forced labor has been inaugurated and legalized, I say that we have certainly been lied to: Hitler is not dead."⁹

Even though it was true that both black and Jew had been dominated by a hostile society, the content of exterior control was not the same. The totalitarian external world had not attempted to imprint the same image on both black and Jewish selfconsciousness. Fanon found that a differential racism existed. "The Negro symbolized the biological danger; the Jew, the intellectual danger"¹⁰

Essentially, the exterior society pictured the black as a sexual gargantuan. Negrophobia originated from an instinctual, biological ground. The external world had made blackness into evilness because, in a puritanical, instinctually repressive society, that society had a phobic reaction against what it saw as biological primitivism. In a rationalized, bureaucratic society, distinctly non-libidinal, the hostile environment was afraid of being overcome by the biological. Thus, a society must segregate and then totally exclude the source of the libidinal threat, the black. Negritude, i.e., unrestrained sexual potency, must be imprisoned.

Anti-Semitism has a different content. The Jew was seen as a religious and cultural subversive and Judaism was seen by the Christian west as the eternal negation because the Jew stood as a reminder that the Christian messiah was, possibly, a fake. The Jewish stereotype evolved in the Middle Ages: the Jew was satanic, a sorcerer, possessed of strange

7. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

8. Frantz Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, translated by Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 166.

9. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 90.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

powers to subvert Christian faith and purity. Throughout the differing cultural epochs of the west, the image of Jew as infiltrator had remained constant. Finally, in the age of capitalism, the Jew was pictured as the financial wizard who surreptitiously controlled the economic mechanisms of the west. The exterior world, then, had constructed an image of the Jew as a devious conspirator and, because of his colonial helplessness, the Jew had been impelled to incorporate this image of himself.

Being paranoiac, the exterior world dreamt of exterminating those imagined threats. But just as there was differentiated racism, so there was differentiated genocide. The black was castrated because society saw him as unrestrained sexual potency. Black corporeality was violated, because it was as a concrete personality, the seducer of white women, that he was a threat. The Jew was killed. Because the Jewish people were a threat, because the Jewish subversion was collective, punishment must be generic. What must be eradicated in the Jew was not so much his personality, but his existence.

No anti-Semite, for example, would ever conceive of the idea of castrating the Jew. He is killed or sterilized. But the Negro is castrated. The penis, the symbol of manhood, is annihilated, which is to say that it is denied. The difference between the two attitudes is apparent. The Jew is attacked in his religious identity, in his history, in his race, in his relations with his ancestors and with his posterity. When one sterilizes a Jew, one cuts off the source, every time that a Jew is persecuted, it is the whole race that is persecuted in his person. But it is in his corporality that the Negro is attacked. It is as a concrete personality that he is lynched. It is as an actual being that he is a threat. The Jewish menace is replaced by the fear of the sexual potency of the Negro.¹¹

In this situation, resistance was not so much an inherent natural right for Fanon, but the only means to recapture sanity, dignity and activity. To a colonial, resistance was tantamount to self-survival. "And this dialectical gangrene is exacerbated by the coming to awareness and the determination of millions of Negroes and Jews to fight this racism by which they are victimized."¹²

Contra Al Fatah

In the Palestinian National Covenant (1968), article 20 reads:

The Balfour Declaration, the Mandate Document, and what has been based upon them are considered null and void. The claim of a historical or spiritual tie between Jews and Palestine does not tally with historical realities nor with the constituents of statehood in their true sense. Judaism, in its character as a religion of revelation, is not a nationality with an independent existence. Likewise, the Jews are not one people with an independent personality. They are rather citizens of the states to which they belong.¹³

11. *Ibid.*, pp 162-163.

12. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 36.

13. Y. Harkabi, "The Position of the Palestinians in the Arab-Israeli Conflict and their National Covenant (1968)," *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics*, III (Spring, 1970), p. 239.

The Al Fatah, in brief, denied that the Jews form one people, a nation. Fanon, the philosopher of national liberation movements, stood in absolute contradiction to the Al Fatah position. For Fanon, the Jews were, indeed, a people.

Let us say that the concessions we have made are fictitious. Philosophically and politically there is no such thing as an African people. There is an African world. And a West Indian world as well. On the other hand, it can be said that there is a Jewish people; but not a Jewish race.¹⁴

Fanon recognized the nationhood of the Jews because they shared a common historical experience, a common religion and culture. Although scattered throughout different regions of western civilization, the Jews shared a common experience within Christian society. They were a colonized people, an oppression based on religious exclusiveness. Their religion drew them together, and their culture and mores, derived from their religion, drew them together.

Thus, the Jews possessed, in Fanon's eyes, all of the elements of a national liberation movement. They were a nation. They had been a colonized people. Like any colonially oppressed people, it was the need of those dominated by the Other to resist, to make war, because it was only through violence that dignity for the enslaved could be recaptured. Violence was both necessary and justified, he told the Algerians, because it was only thus that their cultural identity could be rewon. The war of 1948 in Palestine was a Jewish war of national self-determination.

Fanon told the Jews that as a result of their conquest of Palestine they would undergo personal and national rebirth.

It is to be taken for granted, to illustrate, that the Jews who have settled in Israel will produce in less than a hundred years a collective unconscious different from the ones that they had had before 1945 in the countries which they were forced to leave.¹⁵

The Testimony of Silence

The Pro-Zionism of Fanon is clear. But something is missing. What is absent is a categorical statement in support of Israel. What we have is the overwhelming proof of silence.

When Fanon died in 1961, he had witnessed the War of Independence of 1948, the Suez War of 1956, the plight of the Palestinian refugees in the camps and the emergence of the Palestinian Liberation Organization. He never condemned the original creation of Israel, nor did he condemn Israel for attacking Egypt in 1956 in alliance with the French and English, even though it was understood that the French strike at Egypt was done in part as punishment for, and prevention of, further assistance to the Algerians who were in rebellion against France. He did

14. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 18.

15. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, p. 188.

not claim that the existence of the Palestinian refugees, or the Dir Yasin massacre, were illustrations of Israeli genocide. Fanon had called America a racist society vis-à-vis the Arabs. He had deplored Soviet colonialism as well as American and western colonialism, but he never referred to Israel as a colonizing power in the Near East. In addition, Fanon never asserted that the Palestinian Liberation Organization was a national liberation movement. The voice of Algerian decolonization never embraced the Palestinian movement as a decolonizing rebellion.

Fanon was an engaged man. He was committed. He was an outspoken advocate of Lumumba. In 1958, he attended an African Congress in Accra, hoping for a United States of Africa, in agreement with Nkrumah and thankful to Nkrumah for recognizing the Provisional Government of Algeria. In 1960, he was back in Accra, this time opening up a base through which supplies could flow to insurrectionary Algeria. His silence on Israel was not an accident or oversight, it was premeditated. The fact that he did not speak out during such horrendous times in the Near East, during a period of Arab humiliation and defeat, proves that he did not want to condemn Israel because he recognized in Israel the legitimate outcome of Jewish national self-determination.

Pan-Africanism formed the core of Fanon's ideology. However, his Pan-Africanism was political rather than cultural. He wanted Africa to unite, not as a cultural monolith, but as a political entity, guided by one policy of ridding the dark continent of colonial domination. Aware that culture was inherently national, Fanon ridiculed all attempts at making it continental or trans-continental.¹⁶ The Algerian struggle was to be the vanguard of the Pan-African revolution. The Algerian insurrection was to be the model for all African decolonizing rebellions. In terms of this *weltpolitik*, the existence of Israel was not seen as a hindrance. Zionism was not a strategic enemy of African independence within the context of his Pan-Africanism; Fanon had no reason to fear Zionism.

Furthermore, Fanon was aware that the Moslem world, too, like the African, was experiencing a political and cultural renaissance. But just as there could be no culture of negritude, so there could be no culture of Arabism. The Moslem world was not supra-national, but would assume cultural crystallization within national entities.

Not a victim of counter-racism, Fanon possessed no hatred of whites based upon a myth of racial unity of non-white people. He recognized that in past history the Arabs had come to Africa as colonizers:

The Lebanese, in whose hands is the greater part of the small trading enterprises on the western seaboard, are marked out for national obloquy. The missionaries find it opportune to remind the masses that long before the advent of European colonialism the great African empires were

16. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1966), p. 173. For Fanon's view on the lack of a Pan-African cultural unity, see David Caute's *Frantz Fanon* (New York: Viking Press, 1970).

disrupted by the Arab invasion. There is no hesitation in saying that it was the Arab occupation which paved the way for European colonialism; Arab imperialism is commonly spoken of, and the cultural imperialism of Islam is condemned. Moslems are usually kept out of the more important posts. In other regions the reverse is the case, and it is the native Christians who are considered as conscious, objective enemies of national independence.¹⁷

There did not exist an instinctual, biological kinship between African and Arab. Fanon did not feel that people of colored skin, that is, non-white skin, formed natural, intuitive allies.

In parallel fashion, in certain young states of Black Africa, members of parliament, or even ministers, maintain without a trace of humor that the danger is not at all of a reoccupation of their country by colonialism but of an eventual invasion by "those vandals of Arabs coming from the North."¹⁸

The Third World, for Fanon, did not mean that people of colored skin were inherently harmonious and non-factionalized. The Third World was a term designating people sharing the common political endeavor of expelling the common enemy. The Third World consisted of those who wished to liberate themselves politically from European slavery; beyond that there were only national cultural organisms.

Even though Fanon was, above all, a Pan-African, even though he recognized the national divisions in the Moslem world, even though he understood that dark-skinned Arabs and black Africans did not form inherent racial allies, he applauded the Arab movement toward self-determination. The nationalist movements in the Near East were other illustrations of de-Europeanization. But even in *The Wretched of the Earth*, written in 1961, after the wars of 1948 and 1956, in which he supported the Arab movement, he never condemned Israel as a barrier to Moslem independence.¹⁹ In no way did he suggest that the existence of Israel was a hindrance to the legitimate demands of Arab nationalism. In short, Fanon never indicated that there existed an unavoidable or necessary conflict between Arab and Jewish national aspirations.

Lastly, it is abundantly clear that Fanon harbored no resentment towards any of the branches of the Jewish nation, either in Algeria, in Israel, or elsewhere. In his book, *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon rejected the charge that the Algerian Jews had been disloyal during the insurrection. He recognized that a small percentage of them had been pro-French because of the fear that their businesses and property would be taken by the Algerians. A small group had identified themselves with the colonial establishment because their social status and personal dignity were in-

17. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 130.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 172-173.

terconnected with French domination.²⁰ However, the largest portion of Algerian Jewry had supported the Algerian war of independence. The French, attempting to divide Algerian and Jew, had followed a policy of exploiting Jewish fears in the hope of turning the Jew against the Algerians.²¹ In spite of this duplicity, Jews contributed money to the rebels and Jewish civil servants protected Algerian guerrilla forces. The Jews were loyalists, and Fanon hoped that they would help build a multi-national state. In fact, he quotes a statement made by the Army of National Liberation in the fall of 1956 to the Jews of Algeria:

The Algerian people consider that it is their duty today to address themselves directly to the Jewish community in order to ask it solemnly to affirm its intention to belong to the Algerian nation. This clearly affirmed choice will dissipate all misunderstandings and will root out the germs of the hatred maintained by French colonialism.²²

In 1956, the year of the Suez War, and afterwards, Fanon harbored no bitterness toward Jews or the Jewish state. In relation to the Suez crisis, he wrote: "There was left to France only a third and last operation to resort to. The Suez expedition was meant to strike the Algerian Revolution at the summit. Egypt, accused of directing the struggle of the Algerian people was criminally bombarded."²³ Even though Israel was allied with France in 1956, the real enemy was France. The real source of the problem in the Near East was always in Washington, Paris, or London.²⁴ Thus, Israel was no threat to Algerian or African independence. Thus, Israel was no threat to Arab nationalism.

The evidence is conclusive. Fanon recognized the Jews as a nation. Like the Algerians, the Jews had been a colonized nation. By his own logic, all dominated nations needed a state, needed a rebellion to acquire territorial autonomy and, consequently, cultural rejuvenation. Fanon never condemned the Zionist state, either at the creation or through its future history as long as his life spanned that history. His writing legitimized Zionism as a national liberation movement. He never withdrew commitment to Zionism as an authentic expression of Jewish de-colonization and renewal.

20. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, translated by Haakon Chevalier (New York: Grove Press, 1965), pp. 153-154.

For further vignettes of Fanon's personal life, see Simone de Beauvoir's *The Force of Circumstances* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1964).

21. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 59.

22. Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, p. 156.

23. Fanon, *Toward the African Revolution*, p. 61.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

*The Place of Israel in Reform Jewish Theology**

JOSHUA O. HABERMAN

IN JULY, 1971, THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE World Union for Progressive Judaism, meeting in London, authorized the transfer of its international headquarters from New York to Jerusalem. Four months later, in November, 1971, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, at its General Assembly in Los Angeles, resolved to erect a Jerusalem Educational Center adjacent to the campus of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion's Jerusalem School. This new center, to be erected in 1973, will house the Israel program of American Reform Judaism and the offices of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

These decisions mark the completion of a powerful and prolonged struggle within the Reform movement to reverse the anti-Zionist position which it maintained during the first century of its existence. The reversal came late and, with nearly revolutionary suddenness, just prior to the outbreak of World War II.

What is the theological basis of Reform's shift from adamant anti-Zionism to full endorsement of the return to Zion?

The changing place of Israel in Reform Jewish theology can be understood only within the context of two historical events of the greatest magnitude, two polaric experiences which have shaped the course of modern Jewish history: the Emancipation and the Holocaust.

On September 28, 1791, after two long years of debate, the revolutionary National Assembly passed a decree granting citizenship to the Jews of France. For the first time after all the centuries of diaspora, homelessness and persecution, a European nation bestowed equality, at least in law, upon its Jews. The passage of the decree was hailed by many Jews as something close to Messianic fulfillment. Yet, less than a century later, the rising tide of political and racial anti-Semitism not only wiped out the gains of Emancipation but ushered in a long succession of pogroms, climaxed by the Holocaust, which brought the Jewish people closer to annihilation than ever in all of its history.

We shall now sketch the effect of this dramatic century upon the thinking of the Reform movement with respect to Jewish nationhood and trace the emerging place of Israel in Reform Jewish theology.

* This article is based upon a paper delivered at the General Assembly of the UAHC in Los Angeles in 1971.

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Denationalization, the Price of Emancipation

The emancipation of the Jews came late in the course of the French Revolution and it carried a price ticket. Arthur Hertzberg's study, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, reproduces some of the prolonged and tortuous debates which delayed the granting of equal citizenship to the Jews for two full years after the revolutionaries had so boldly proclaimed the "Rights of Man." All other minorities, including Negroes, were preferred above the Jews. When, at last, they, too, were admitted to the rights and privileges of citizenship, it was, as Hertzberg shows, less a triumph of humanitarian sympathy and tolerance than of cold logic.¹ The delegates were persuaded that the Jews had to be emancipated in order to complete the Revolution, that the principle of equality had to be applied to all the people of France. Thus, the status of Jews changed dramatically, even though prejudice against them remained in full force. It was one of the tragedies of Jewish history that the Jews did not realize how perfectly well the French adage, "the more it changes, the more it remains the same," applied to their own condition.

The Emancipation was a *quid pro quo*. One of the notable leaders of the revolution, Count Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre, himself an ardent champion of the Emancipation, had fixed the price which the Jews were expected to pay for their rights. His memorable statement, "To the Jews as a nation—nothing; to the Jews as individuals—everything!"² challenged the Jews to regard themselves no longer as members of a Jewish nation but, rather, as Frenchmen of the Jewish religion and to renounce all hope for a restoration of Jewish national sovereignty. The Jews of Western and Central Europe, notably of Germany, rose to this challenge with enthusiasm.

In Eastern Europe, the offer of equal citizenship was never seriously extended to the Jews. Consequently, they were spared the process of denationalization which so greatly altered the sense of Jewish identity in Central and Western Europe.

Early Reform, a Response to Emancipation

It was only logical that the wealthier, upper class Jews were most impatient to leap over the ghetto walls which blocked their social and economic mobility. It was a rule of thumb that the more wealth, the more contact with gentiles; the more exposure to non-Jews, the more assimilation. Clearly, the upper class Jew had the most to gain by Emancipation. His own eagerness for integration with the larger environment made religious and ritual change imperative. Not surprisingly, upper class Jews were the ones who initiated the Reform movement.

1. Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 356.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 360.

One of the first and most influential initiators of Reform was David Friedlander, disciple of Moses Mendelssohn, a banker, and one of Prussia's richest and most influential Jews. In 1812, the year when Prussia granted citizenship to its Jews, Friedlander reflected the new mood of rapturous confidence in the coming of the new age of universal brotherhood which, to his own way of thinking, called for a radical denationalization of Judaism. In his monstrously entitled publication, "About the Rebuilding Made Necessary by the New Organization of Jewry in the Prussian States with Reference to Worship, Religious and General Education—A Word for His Time,"³ David Friedlander wrote that the time had come for Jews to remove from their worship all yearning for Palestine, Jerusalem and the restoration of the ancient Temple. Prussian Jews, he said, would prefer to exclaim:

Here I stand before God. I pray for blessing and success for my King, for my fellow citizens, for myself, for my family—and not for a return to Jerusalem, not for a restoration of the Temple . . .⁴

For David Friedlander, the hope for a restoration of Palestine was not a theological doctrine but a historical abnormality, the psychologically understandable response of a rejected people. Excluded as aliens by all others, Jews had no choice but to withdraw into their own shell. Said Friedlander:

As long as the Jews were, if not actually persecuted, at least regarded as strangers and treated as such . . . as long as they were only made to feel—but were actually told—that they were only tolerated and that they really belonged to Palestine, so long was there neither cause nor reason to change the contents and the language of the prayers.⁵

But now it was different! There was no more need to pretend a longing for Palestine which Jews really no longer felt in their hearts.

Friedlander set the predominant tone for the entire Reform movement down to the onset of World War II, as is illustrated in the carefully documented study by Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe*. Only seven years after Friedlander's strong disavowal of every trace of Jewish national identity, the first Reform prayerbook in history was issued in Hamburg in 1819. A few decades later, a young man by the name of Gustav Poznanski (1805–1879), who had been educated in Hamburg and influenced by its Reform temple, became the cantor of America's first Reform congregation, Beth Elohim of Charles-

3. David Friedlander, "Über die, durch die neue Organisation der Judenschaften der Preussischen Staaten notwendig gewordene Umbildung. 1. ihres Gottesdienstes in den Synagogen, 2. ihrer Unterrichts-Anstalten, und deren Lehrgegenstände, und 3. ihres Erziehungs-Wesens überhaupt.—Ein Wort zu seiner Zeit" (Berlin, 1812. Published anonymously).

4. Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1968), p. 278.

5. Ibid., p. 277.

ton, South Carolina. At the dedication of its new building in 1841, Poznanski echoed the spirit of David Friedlander, saying, "This synagogue is our Temple, this city our Jerusalem, this happy land our Palestine."⁶

A Theology for Denationalized Jews

The practical reforms and the revision of the prayerbook, which David Friedlander had inspired, were greatly in need of a theoretical or theological foundation. This was supplied by the first and most important theologian of Reform, Abraham Geiger. In his *Judaism and its History*, one of the most influential books in the library of Reform, Geiger interpreted Jewish history as an evolution in three major stages: First, the Biblical age, which saw the birth and development of the Jewish nation. Then, the post-Biblical diaspora period, in which Judaism was carried into all parts of mankind yet remained apart and oppressed even while it was faithfully preserved by the scattered Jewish communities. Then, at last, the third stage, which had already begun and in which a free Judaism might become an effective force in the life of humanity.⁷ For Geiger, Israel as a sovereign people and state had theological significance only within a limited historical context. Indispensable as Jewish nationhood was for the origin of Judaism, so was its abandonment, then, in order that Judaism might flourish in its universal unfolding.

Geiger's concept of Jewish history was an ascending line of "progress." It began with a national existence, temporarily necessary for the incubation of the spirit of Judaism among the people. In the current era of universalism, it was the mission of the Jews to spread Judaism unto all parts of the world. This was then happening by way of a spiritual contagion which was possible only in intimate contact with the gentile environment. In the light of this theory, the greatest tragedies in Jewish history, such as the loss of the Temple, the destruction of Jerusalem, the expulsion from Palestine and the long diaspora, appear as blessings in disguise revealing God's providential direction of history designed to universalize the Jewish people. In the new era, the nationalistic elements in the Jewish tradition were detrimental, retrogressive, a relapse to a more primitive level of Judaism.

Reform's Record of Anti-Zionism

It would be impossible to find a thinker of Reform Judaism in the 19th and the first quarter of the 20th century who did not echo, in one way or the other, Geiger's concept of a Judaism on the march from an

6. Gunther Plaut, *The Growth of Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1965), pp. 8-9.

7. Abraham Geiger, *Judaism and Its History*, tr. Maurice Mayer (New York: Trübner and Co.; London: Thalmessing and Cahn, 1866), Part II, pp. 158-159.

early stage of nationalistic particularism to the advanced level of contemporary universalism.

American Reform Judaism, true to Geiger's spirit, remained wholly negative in its official theological pronouncements concerning Zionism until well after the advent of the Nazi era.

The first conference of American Reform rabbis, held in Philadelphia in 1869, twenty-one years before the organization of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, issued seven resolutions, the first three of which dealt with the question of Jewish peoplehood.⁸ The first resolution is a sharp denial of any desire for "the restoration of the old Jewish state under a son of David . . . or continued separation from other nations." The second resolution sees fit to welcome the loss of Jewish sovereignty as a providential blessing rather than a calamity, designed to "send the members of the Jewish nation to all parts of the earth so that they may fulfill their high priestly task to lead the nations in the true knowledge and worship of God." The third resolution reaffirms the view that history reveals a progression of Judaism from a nationalistic cult to "the true priestly service of the whole people which, in fact, began with a dispersion of the Jewish nation." This classic document of American Reform Judaism is the Pittsburgh Platform, adopted by the fifteen rabbis in attendance in the year 1885.⁹

Acknowledging continuity with the Conference in Philadelphia in 1869, the framers of the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 reformulated, as clearly and precisely as possible, the view that the elements of Jewish nationhood had become entirely obsolete and had no relevance for Reform Judaism. I quote, in full, the important fifth paragraph:

We recognize in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect the approach of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope of the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. We consider ourselves no longer a nation but a religious community and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine nor a sacrificial worship under the administration of the sons of Aaron, nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.

Felix Adler (1851-1933), the founder of the Ethical Culture movement, himself the son of a Reform rabbi and trained for the rabbinate, taunted the framers of the Pittsburgh Platform as inconsistent men who would not draw the consequences of their own thinking. After denying so eloquently a distinctly Jewish peoplehood, why should they not take the next logical step and merge with the Unitarians if they could not find it in their hearts to join his own Ethical Culture Society? If Jews are no longer a distinct nation but only a religious community, why not join with others who hold similar religious beliefs?¹⁰

8. Plaut, *Op. cit.*, pp. 29-31.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 31 ff.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40.

Failing to recognize in Felix Adler's analysis an implied warning as to what might happen to a Reform Judaism deprived of its ethnic roots, the Reform movement rushed headlong into the battle against the new Zionist movement. Kaufmann Kohler, in his *Jewish Theology*, absolutely denied the theological value of Zionism: "Zionism, whether political or cultural, can have no place in Jewish theology."¹¹ In 1897, the year of the first Zionist Congress in Basle, Switzerland, the Central Conference of American Rabbis declared bluntly: "We totally disapprove of any attempt for the establishment of a Jewish state."¹²

The most significant Jewish historical event of the 20th Century, prior to the Nazi era, was the issuance of the Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917, pledging the help of the British government in the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. It marked the first official recognition by one of the world's leading powers of the Jewish claim to continued national existence in the land of its origin. While acknowledging the Balfour Declaration "as an evidence of good will toward the Jews," the Central Conference of American Rabbis immediately reaffirmed its anti-nationalistic position, stating:

We are opposed to the idea that Palestine should be considered the homeland of the Jews. The ideal of the Jew is not the establishment of a Jewish state—not the reassertion of Jewish nationality which has long been outgrown.¹³

Two years later, the Union American Hebrew Congregations endorsed the stand of the Reform rabbinate, declaring that "we are Jews in religion and Americans in nationality."¹⁴

Reform's Recent Shift Toward Zionism

Less than twenty years later, the CCAR, meeting in Columbus, Ohio, reflected an amazing reversal of Reform Judaism's view of Jewish nationalism. The Columbus platform of 1937, in its opening sentence, firmly reestablished the centrality of peoplehood in Judaism: "Judaism is the historical religious experience of the Jewish people."¹⁵

It was the long delayed answer to Felix Adler's question why Reform Jews do not join the Unitarians or the Ethical Culture Society. Judaism is more than a combination of ethical and theological abstractions, verbalized and formulated in a set of creedal propositions. There is no Judaism apart from the Jewish people. Jewish identity is not merely a cerebral thing but a sense of historical community and shared destiny with the Jewish people everywhere.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 145–147.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, p. 96 ff.

The special paragraph on Israel begins with the assertion that "Judaism is the soul of which Israel is the body." It goes on with a recognition of the importance of a common historical consciousness, tying together the scattered Jewish communities, seeing value in purely secular ethnic belonging, even though the bond of religion is acknowledged to be of primary importance. This is followed by a statement disarming the possible charge of dual loyalty and reaffirming Western Jewry's unwritten pledge in exchange for Emancipation:

In all lands where our people live, they assume and seek to share loyally the full duties and responsibilities of citizenship and to create seats of Jewish knowledge and religion.

Then comes Reform Judaism's first affirmative statement on a sovereign Jewish existence, not merely recognizing its possibility, but accepting the obligation of all Jews to render support to a Jewish homeland in Palestine:

In the rehabilitation of Palestine, the land hallowed by memories and hopes, we behold the promise of renewed life for many of our brethren. We affirm the obligation of all Jewry to aid in its upbuilding as a Jewish homeland by endeavoring to make it not only a haven of refuge for the oppressed but also a center of Jewish culture and spiritual life.

The closing sentence of the statement on Israel in the Columbus Platform reaffirms, in somewhat subdued words, the concept of a universal mission which the movement owes to Abraham Geiger:

Throughout the ages it has been Israel's mission to witness to the Divine in the face of every form of paganism and materialism. We regard it as our historic task to cooperate with all men in the establishment of the Kingdom of God, of universal brotherhood, justice, truth and peace on earth. This is our Messianic goal.

There is no precedent for the Columbus Platform statement on Israel in any previous declaration of Reform Judaism on the subject. It is not an outgrowth of previous thinking by Reform theologians but, rather, the response to convulsive historical events which radically altered the world and Israel's place in it.

The dean of the German liberal rabbinate, Caesar Seligmann, in 1937, the very year of the adoption of the Columbus Platform, rendered a sharply critical review of the movement over which he had presided for some twenty-five years. He acknowledged Reform's grave error in ignoring the possibilities of a renewal of Judaism through Zionism which had inscribed on its banner Theodore Herzl's statement: "Zionism is the return to Judaism before returning to the Jewish land." Rabbi Seligmann also shed light on the major cause for the new mood in Reform Judaism. It was the death of the easy, optimistic humanism which the enlightenment period had inspired; he referred to it as "the change of

fate which has overcome us and which has cast us forth from the heavens of progressive humanism.”¹⁶

As the Nazi era's descent into hell proved so clearly, the world was very far, indeed, from the advent of the universal age of brotherhood. The nations were not minded to receive their Jewish fellow citizens with fraternal assurance of equality and fairness. There was little chance that the scattered survivors of the Holocaust in Europe, frightened and trembling for their security, could fulfill the grandiose mission which Abraham Geiger had envisaged for diaspora Jewry: to function as a priestly people among the nations.

Reform, in a state of euphoria over the Emancipation, had been quick to write off the persistent sense of Jewish national identity as an anachronism in the approaching age of universalism. Today, in this post-Holocaust age, Jewish thinkers are tempted to fall into the opposite extreme of theological despair. In morbid fascination with the demonic forces that appear to be regnant in history, they would altogether discard Israel's Messianic hope. This would be a denial of the Biblical doctrine of salvation and of the God of history to whom the Jewish people have given witness from the Exodus on throughout the ages.

Ethno-Theology

There is need for a theology of Israel which can reconcile a distinctive Jewish national existence with a world-saving, universal faith. Such a theology exists. Its basic position has been developed by the most significant theologian of Reform in the 20th Century, Leo Baeck. He accomplishes the task in his *Essence of Judaism*,¹⁷ most likely to remain the enduring classic of contemporary Reform. Revelation, the election of Israel and the preservation of Israel as a distinctive people are mutually indispensable in Baeck's view: "Everybody who is in possession of a truth feels a peculiar responsibility bestowed upon him which separates him from other men."¹⁸

When a people becomes conscious of a distinctive message, such as the unique conception of ethical monotheism by the Jewish people, the message becomes a mission and justifies, even requires, self-segregation. "Exclusiveness," says Baeck, "has the same significance for the community as the command to segregated holiness has for the individual."¹⁹ As the sacred must be separated from the profane, so a people committed to certain sanctities must remain apart from those not sharing their commitment. Such exclusiveness is not egocentric but idealistic. This leads Baeck to the conclusion that, in Judaism, particularism and uni-

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 106-198.

17. Leo Baeck, *The Essence of Judaism*, revised ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1948).

18. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

versalism are related, as are the means to the end. If the revelation received by Israel is essential to the spiritual elevation of mankind, Israel must be preserved as a distinctive people, fulfilling its mission as its uniquely national task. Says Baeck: "Israel's distinctive existence thus became a consciousness of its service for mankind's future."²⁰ In Baeck's view, Jewish particularism and nationalism are not incompatible but are truly complementary to each other.

We see in Baeck the renewal of a basic position in Jewish theology which might be called "ethno-theology," i.e., the insistence upon the theological meaning of peoplehood. This position was most fully developed by our Spanish poet-philosopher, Yehudah Halevi, in his famous *Kuzari*; it was re-stated in the early part of the 19th century, in the idiom of German idealistic philosophy, by Krochmal in his profound treatise *A Guide for the Perplexed of our Time*. It is the latest and most significant development in modern Jewish theology, holding the promise of bridging deep cleavages within Judaism and, surprisingly, providing a new meeting ground for Judaism and Christianity.

The Relevance of Ethno-Theology

a. Re-unification of the Jewish Community

Perhaps the most serious cleavage in modern Judaism is that described by the terms "secular" and "religious." We distinguish between the affiliated and the unaffiliated Jews. In every community we see secular and religious institutions in competition for leadership and financial resources. Not forgotten are the old battle lines between secular and religious Zionism, between secular Zionism and the religious Jewish community, between the secular Jewish socialist movements and the religious establishment. Not only in the diaspora but, also, in the State of Israel, there is a deep cleavage between the secular and the religious.

This cleavage can be overcome in the light of Jewish ethno-theology, whose most articulate thinker today is the neo-Reform theologian, Emil L. Fackenheim. According to him, the distinction between secularist and religious Jews is no longer valid in the post-Holocaust age. He absolutizes the survival of the Jews as having paramount religious significance, *per se*. In an age when the whole world stood by while evil, personified in Adolf Hitler, plotted and nearly succeeded in the extinction of the Jewish people, a mere commitment to Jewish survival is a witness against Satan, against the diabolic force alive in the world today. Says Fackenheim:

A secular holiness, side by side with the religious, is becoming manifest in contemporary Jewish existence . . . Israel is collectively what every survivor is individually: a "No" to the demons of Auschwitz, a "Yes" to

20. Ibid., pp. 69-70.

Jewish survival and security—and thus a testimony to life against death on behalf of all mankind.²¹

b. Social Action

Moreover, contemporary thinkers, both Jewish and Christian, have come to realize that the secular world is not the antithesis, but is the very proving ground of the spiritual. For Judaism, this may mean that, having the State of Israel, Jews are now challenged to apply ideals of holiness to the concrete realities of statehood. The characteristic of the Jewish exile was its powerlessness. Powerlessness and irresponsibility go hand in hand. Now that the Jewish people has a state of its own, the exercise of power, the use of sovereignty and the shaping of national policy become tests of Judaism. In the blunt words of Prof. Irving Greenberg of Yeshiva University, Jews in Israel are challenged in their Judaism to “put up or shut up.”²²

c.. Judaeo-Christian Understanding

Contemporary Christianity has, likewise, rediscovered the secular world as the arena for the validation of religious faith. It began nearly a century ago, with the stress by Protestant thinkers, upon the social gospel. The trend received fresh emphasis in Catholicism in the second Vatican Council's new concern for “social institutions and social life.” This development has opened up a new Christian understanding for the age-old Jewish preoccupation with the major and minor facets, even the minutiae, which are required for the creation of a just social and political community. For the first time, perhaps, the Christian world can better understand the age-old Jewish stress on “halakhah.” Formerly denounced as “pharisaic legalism,” it is now being recognized as the sanctification of the profane, the transformation of ethical abstractions into social realities.

Whereas the classic Reformers feared the restoration of Jewish nationhood as an insurmountable barrier between Jews and Christians, the deeper truth seen today is that neither Judaism nor Christianity can survive in the free market of ideas unless each proves its capacity to shape a better society. Cornelius Rijk, director of the Vatican Office of Catholic-Jewish Relations, alluded thus to the common concern of Judaism and Christianity for a more effective role of religion in secular society:

The tendency of modern theology to emphasize the involvement of the faithful in social and political realities may be a meeting point with

21. Emil L. Fackenheim, “The People Israel Lives: How My Mind Has Changed,” *The Christian Century*, May 6, 1970.

22. From a lecture by Irving Greenberg, “Theological Dimensions of the State of Israel: A Jewish Viewpoint,” p. 40, delivered at the convocation, *Toward a Theology of Israel*, sponsored by the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies and the American Jewish Committee, October 25–28, 1970.

Jewish thinking, thus creating a better understanding between Jews and Christians. This may promote a deeper common involvement in the preparation of the Kingdom of God.²³

Zionism Transcending Nationalism

The only power that could destroy the theological meaning of Israel would be Israel itself. Twice, Zionism stood at the crossroads. Each time it chose a direction which emphasized the theological meaning of the State to be created. The first, at the turn of the century, when the great debate within Zionism on the question of territorialism ended with the rejection of all other territories for Jewish colonization except Israel's ancient homeland. Political and economic considerations might have dictated another course, but the Zionist movement, in its insistence upon the land of Israel, was guided by a Biblical view of Jewish destiny which transcend pragmatic values.

The second time Zionism chose to give the State of Israel a meaning larger than purely national sovereignty was immediately after the proclamation of the State in 1948. Its first law was the law of return, which recognized the absolute and inalienable right of all Jews to share in the destiny of Israel. Here, too, a principle greater than the State, itself, was recognized. The State of Israel is not merely the political instrument of its inhabitants, but remains the concrete reality in which the Jewish spirit may become manifest in the unfolding of a new society. The State is charged with a redemptive role in history.

A Summary of Reform's Theological Approach to Israel

Looking back on a century and a half, we note a striking change with reference to Israel's place in Reform theology. Early Reform, excited by the promise of Emancipation, conceived its task to be the preparation of the Jewish people for a new era of civic and religious equality. Since the gentile world had opened its door, the next move was up to the Jews. A consensus developed that the first step in the integration of the Jews in Western society would have to be a fundamental change of Jewish identity from nationhood to religious denomination. Henceforth, Jews would strive to be citizens of their native country, "of the Mosaic persuasion." Theologically, this was expressed by urging a shift from a "narrow," ethnic particularism to a broad, religious universalism. Reform stressed, therefore, so-called "prophetic Judaism" and its Messianic goal, an era in which all mankind would be united in justice, brotherhood and peace. In striving for this universalist outlook, remnants of Israel's Oriental past and ancient national institutions were declared obsolete.

23. Lecture by Uriel Tal, "A Theology of Christianity—a Jewish Perspective," p. 16, delivered at the convocation referred to in footnote 22.

By universalizing their theology and cult, Reform Jews also felt that they were paving the way for a new and better era in Judaeo-Christian understanding. The leading classic theologians of Reform, Geiger and Kaufmann Kohler, stressed the contrast between the particularistic and universal elements in Judaism, identifying the former with a more primitive level and the latter with a more mature phase of an evolving Judaism. If attachment and longing for a return to Zion could no longer be justified on religious grounds, it followed that hopes for the restoration of a national existence in Palestine were of a purely secular, even political nature. As such, Zionist aspirations were rejected as endangering the status of the Jew as a citizen in his native land by exposing him to the charge of dual loyalty.

The collapse of the high hopes of Emancipation, which became increasingly evident in the 20th Century, particularly with the advent of the Nazi period, brought about a sudden reversal of the attitude of Reform toward the concept of Jewish nationhood and Israel. Owing to the work of Leo Baeck, Emil L. Fackenheim and others, Reform Jews have re-discovered a primary theological importance in the concept of Israel. In Reform's current view, Jewish sovereign existence in a state of their own is not incompatible with a world-saving task enunciated in prophetic Judaism. Indeed, Judaism's relevance to the shaping of a better society can best be tested in a setting where Jews have both political power and full responsibility. Without expecting the State of Israel to act by standards of perfection suitable to the Messianic age, Reform Jews, nevertheless, look to the State to represent the best of Jewish ethics and idealism within the limitations of political reality. At long last, they have come to see in the State of Israel, not an impediment, but a pedestal for the full exposure of Judaism in the eyes of the world. Indeed, the State may advance Israel's universal mission of which the early Reformers spoke so ardently. Whatever Israel's universal mission might be, it requires the preservation of the Jewish people. In this post-Holocaust age, the State of Israel is crucial in the preservation of the Jewish people without which Judaism would vanish.

Reform Judaism's "New" Mission

JOSEPH R. NAROT

REFORM JUDAISM HAS OFTEN BEEN ACCUSED—bitterly from without and also intensely from within—of being “too extreme,” of having “gone too far.” This has been a charge levelled equally at Reform’s attitude to ritual (*mizvot*); to *sancta* (notably the Hebrew Bible); to concepts (the mission of the Jew and of Judaism); and to historic realities and necessities (the peoplehood of Israel).

Scholars and laymen alike have shared in these criticisms. My esteemed colleague, Rabbi Haberman, has typically and eruditely documented the former; and my revered mother, *zikhronah livrakhah*, spoke—to me, at least—for the latter. Her impressive worldly wisdom came from her daily reading of the *Jewish Daily Forward*. She “knew” that Reform Jews *zeinen erger vi di goyim*. Her antipathy for Reform, however, was mitigated by her love for her son. She resolved her dilemma by concluding that her son was innocent, that *zei hoben dir farfirt*. By “they who misled you” she meant, of course, the David Philipsons, the Julian Morgensterns, and all the other “extremists” who then constituted the who’s who of Reform.

The point is that both laymen and scholars have believed that Reform Judaism has been itself misled and is misleading others; that it has gone astray and is leading others astray; that it has been guilty of “denying the essence;” that it has violated the classic Deuteronomic (13.1) injunction, “Thou shalt not diminish from it.”

Now the writer believes that this observation has been correct in great part, just as he feels that Reform’s excessive zeal served a necessary and useful purpose, not only for Reform itself, but also for all of Judaism and all the Jewish people. All rebellions—not to speak of revolutions—take extreme forms. Hasidism was certainly radical in its first stages. It was modified, as we now know, in later episodes of its unfoldment; but who shall deny the enduring and inspiring benefits which the earlier masters, in their extreme protests, brought to the totality of our heritage? Indeed, would that latter day Hasidism might be touched by some of that extremism of which Israel Baal Shem Tov and his first successors were deliberately, fervently and happily guilty!

Reform Judaism did, in fact, carry its reforms “too far.” But these proved to be benefactions to all. The “shrimp dinner” (alleged or fac-

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tual) aside, Conservative Judaism was a vigorous response to Reform's radical move to the left. Moreover, Conservative Judaism's way was made relatively easy and non-controversial by Reform's pioneering. Some Conservative changes seemed mild in contrast to those of Reform (such as their varying philosophic and pragmatic modifications in the area of *kashrut*), while other Conservative changes were more easily effected because the thundering protests had already lost much of their strength in opposing Reform Judaism, (e.g., the seating of men and women together in synagogues).

Mordecai Kaplan's restructuring of Judaism and Jewishness was able to parallel and, in some instances (such as theology) go beyond Reform. And even Orthodox congregations have openly attacked, but quietly accepted, some Reform suggestions (Confirmation, late Sabbath Eve services, etc.).

What is more, Reform's once bold and debated concepts have been amply complimented in more recent times by widespread, if unannounced, support. How many Jews outside of Reform today still believe in a personal Messiah, in the resurrection of the dead, and, indeed, in a personal God (the last, by the way, a concept which Reform has not ever officially repudiated)?

Still, the fact remains that Reform Judaism did go too far. It did so, for example, in its reassessment of the Bible. When I was a student at the Hebrew Union College, two of my classmates and I almost failed our Biblical studies even though we had acquired, prior to our coming to the College, a fairly literate and thorough knowledge of the Bible. We knew the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings. What we could not grasp were the codes, the documents, and the strata. Biblical Criticism, Reform's pet theme in those days, was defied by our traditional appreciation of the *Tanakh*.

Yet even that extreme passion for a German-oriented, often anti-Semitic based, and almost always dry and abstruse field of study with which Reform scholars dissected the Scriptures yielded some noteworthy advantages.

The use of "scientific" criticism could be softened, and it was; and also spiritualized. But never again was it necessary to confuse reverence for the Bible with blind and irrational acceptance of its every line as the word of God. Now a distinction can be made between seeing the Bible as the literal word of God, with all its crudities, inconsistencies, and outdated concepts glossed over, and viewing the Bible as the written record of our fathers' quest for the word of God, with the same crudities, inconsistencies and outdated concepts placed in proper and candid perspective.

It is also true that Reform Judaism went "too far" in rejecting some sacred and historic rituals. Perhaps *bar-mizvah* is the most obvious ex-

ample. Confirmation for both young men and women was to supersede the millennial dedication of the boy to his ancestral faith. Today, with very few exceptions, (as this is being written, it has been announced that New York City's Temple Emanu-El is bringing *bar-mizvah* back into its program) most Reform synagogues have re-embraced the old ritual. The rite of passage is simply too old, too hallowed, and too logical to be ignored. *Bar mizvah* is today needed perhaps more than ever. In a world of mass movement, confusion, and search for identity, here is an occasion for the young man to be introduced to his identity with affirmation, warmth, and individuality. In an hour when family life and unity have disintegrated almost beyond repair, here is a strong and memorable bond for the Jewish family.

And, yet, *bar-mizvah* now is not what it was before Reform's excesses had discarded it. Now a boy does not *have* to be *bar-mizvah*, he has only to *want* it. Now the standards and requirements are continually being raised. Now he must promise (as must his family) to stay on to Confirmation, and even beyond it, to senior high school religious training. Now he no longer makes unreasonable, unrealizable, and ridiculous "promises;" rather, *bar-mizvah* is a reflection of training accomplished, of knowledge mastered, of meaning comprehended and of hope felt. The fact that Reform was free to start all over again with the old rite presented an opportunity to lift it to more edifying heights.

We are now prepared to look at Reform's mistakes and corrections with respect to the peoplehood of Israel. As Rabbi Haberman correctly reminds us, many unfortunate motivations may help to explain Reform's early rejection of Zionism and concern for the whole Jewish people. All efforts by Reform Jews to limit Judaism only to a religion with a universal mission were frustrated by life, by history, and, again, by logical necessity. Today the Reform rabbinate, laity, liturgy, and thrust are all committed, heart and soul, to the survival and viability of the State of Israel.

But even as the external security and the internal vigor of the State of Israel continue to improve, Reform Judaism is once more in a uniquely endowed position to perform for itself, for the State of Israel and for the Jewish people a new and urgent mission. As Reform's once untenably extreme positions toward the land of Israel and the people of Israel have corrected themselves, an equally dangerous extremism has crept—some will say leapt—into Israel, Zionist, and other Jewish thought. This perilous zeal was often anticipated, but the reality is far more serious than was the expectation. The establishment of the State, on the one hand, and the emergence of grave problems in the Diaspora (such as the drift to the political and legal "right" in American society, on the other hand) have prompted many Jews, in and out of Israel, to all but announce the

demise of the Diaspora and to direct all means, energy, thought, and striving to the Homeland.

Israeli needs, Zionist enthusiasm, and the discovery by American Jews in Israel of a young, fresh, and pioneering Jewish cause have merged to shut out concern for Jewish life outside of the State. Local American Federations and Welfare Funds, Israeli-oriented and directed agencies, as well as rabbis—often Reform—have forged the alliance that threatens to impoverish Judaism and Jewish life in America. An Israeli educator tells a convention of American Jewish (Reform) educators that they should give their attention only to those American Jewish children who will eventually settle in Israel. Leading advocates of the same philosophy say that we cannot, and must not, direct our concern to those millions of Jews who will need to remain in Soviet Russia, only to the thousands who will be permitted to emigrate to Israel. American Jews who accept, unquestioningly, the new extremism, are flattered with national American and Israeli honors with which no American Jewish cause can compete. And, all the while, rabbis and laymen who protest the new extremism are regarded as virtual traitors, whether they speak on local community levels or at broader national and international forums.

To be sure, Reform rabbis and laymen are not the only ones who sense the danger and lament that the matter has now gone too far the other way. But by virtue of the historic role which it has played and the courage it has always had, Reform Judaism is particularly fitted to decry the imbalance of program and philosophy. Surprising as it may seem, now it is Reform Judaism that is, can be, and needs to be, a moderating force.

Consider, for example, the synagogue. Has the fact hit home that when the Jews of Soviet Russia wish to demonstrate their newly awakened Jewishness, they have only one place to go—the hitherto dying synagogue? Do we appreciate the similar fact that when Prime Minister Golda Meir must speak to the Jews of Bucharest in an appropriate place, there is one only such place—the synagogue? These facts substantiate dramatically, if substantiation is necessary, Reform's earlier, and then much maligned, insistence that Judaism is expressed, finally, through its spiritual and universal elements. Even the Israelis, who think they do not need Judaism because their very being in the land of Israel embodies all their Jewishness (time has yet to prove the validity of this notion), admit that Diaspora Jews need the synagogue and its program because nothing else will help them survive as Jews.

Rabbi Haberman is certainly correct in his conclusion that "in this post-Holocaust age, the State of Israel is crucial to the preservation of the Jewish people without which Judaism would vanish." Who would dare to say, even to think, that Erez Yisrael is, God forbid, expendable? The Land is the "rock whence we were hewn and the pit from which

we were digged." The Land is the fulfillment of hope, of life, of a millennial dream.

But this undeniable fact does not justify the premise which some American, as well as Israeli, Jews have held, that if anything should happen to Israel, all of Jewish life would be lost and that, therefore, it is Israel alone that must receive our primary attention. America's six million Jews (the number is co-incidentally significant) are likewise not expendable! Nor Russia's three million! Nor any Jew anywhere in the world! Their existence is, likewise, "crucial in the preservation of the Jewish people without which Judaism would vanish." Indeed, were we to play the cynical numbers game, one might say, even *more* crucial!

It remains, therefore, for Reform Judaism—with all allies available but alone if need be—to renew its defense of Judaism in America, in all the Diaspora, as well as in the land of Israel. As the State needs, each successive year, greater sums to assure its life and growth, so the American synagogues call each year for unprecedented support for their life and growth. We properly thrill to the sights and sounds of a class of *Israeli* children. By what right can we thrill less to the sights and sounds of a class of *American* Jewish boys and girls? To hear an *Israeli* concert, to witness an *Israeli* dramatic spectacle, to walk through an *Israeli* museum—these are, assuredly, memorable experiences. But what, in our culture and history, makes less memorable an *American* Jewish concert, an *American* Jewish dramatic work, or an *American* Jewish museum? Yesterday's Reformers were certainly wrong in closing their eyes to the historic inevitability of the restoration of Zion. Today's Reformers are manifestly right, both in welcoming that restoration and in summoning our strength for the renewal of Jewish idealism, Jewish life, and Jewish faith here and elsewhere, beyond Zion.

This is Reform's new mission. It may yet prove to be Reform's most significant mission.

The Best Kept Secret of the Rabbinic Tradition

SAMSON H. LEVEY

SIMEON BEN ZOMA RANKS HIGH AMONG THE Jewish sages who flourished during the latter part of the first century and the first third of the second century.¹ The precise date and place of his birth are uncertain, and biographical details concerning him are few and sketchy. In the Tannaitic sources, the title "Rabbi" is not generally applied to him, although there are rare exceptions, but he is designated "Rabbi" in the Midrashic references.² According to the Rabbinic tradition, Ben Zoma devoted his entire life to study, never married, and never achieved rabbinic ordination, though he qualified for it,³ and it was assumed that he died young.⁴ More realistically, it is probable that Ben Zoma lived to a ripe old age and died c. 132–133 C. E.⁵ He was a disciple of R. Joshua b. Ḥananiah, one of the five great sages reared by Rabban Yoḥanan b. Zakkai,⁶ and was a recognized authority in some matters of Halakhah.⁷ His exposition of Scripture was regarded as brilliant.⁸ Together with Ben Azzai and Elisha b. Abuyah he is characterized as a *Talmid Ḥakham* par excellence.⁹ He is quoted in a number of instances in the Mishnah and other Tannaitic literary strata and his

1. W. Bacher, "Ben Zoma," *JE*, II, 682 f.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Horayot* 2b; *Sanhedrin* 17b.

4. Rashi, *Kid.* 49b; Bertinoro, *Avot* 4:1.

5. Meyer Waxman, *Shimon Ben Zoma* (in Hebrew), St. Louis, 1928, p. 5 ff.

6. *Hag.* 15a; *M. Avot* 2:8. Z. Frankel contends that Ben Zoma is numbered also among the disciples of R. Ishmael: *Darkhei Hamishnah*, Leipzig, 1859, p. 9; I. H. Weiss, *Dor Dor V'dorshav*, II, 126, regards him also as a student of R. Akiba. Waxman, *loc. cit.*, argues convincingly against the positions of Frankel and Weiss.

7. *M. Nazir* 8:1, where his opinion is preferred by the other sages to that of his teacher, R. Joshua b. Ḥananiah; *M. B'rakhot* 1:5, where his interpretation is considered an amazing insight by R. Eleazar b. Azariah; *Pesaḥim* 22b, a. c. Waxman, *op. cit.*, p. 8 ff. errs in regarding the questions asked of Ben Zoma in *Hag.* 14b, *B'rakhot* 41b and 43a, and *Yoma* 30a, as well as *M. Menahot* 11:4 as Halakhah as we shall demonstrate *infra*.

8. *M. Sotah* 9:15 intimates that he was the last, perhaps the greatest of the *Darshanim*. Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 5:3. *San.* 17b lists him among the five who were qualified to argue before the Sanhedrin.

9. *B'rakhot* 57b. The fact that these three are linked together as *Talmidei Ḥakhamim* and that they were the same three who fared ill in the PRDS incident, *Hag.* 14b, may be indicative that at this stage the Tannaitic term *Talmid Ḥakham* may be something less than desirable and may account for the Tannaitic refusal to give them the title "Rabbi."

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interpretation of the Exodus is not only cited in the Mishnah but has become famous as a vital passage in the Passover Haggadah.¹⁰

It is certain, then, that Ben Zoma had made a name for himself in the circles of normative Rabbinic Judaism during the critical and turbulent years surrounding the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C. E. and prior to the revolt of Bar Kokhba in 132. Evidence of his recognized status as an eminent scholar is clear-cut and definitive and subject to no doubt or misinterpretation. The fact that his opinions are cited in the Mishnah indicates that R. Judah Ha-Nasi, the redactor of the Mishnah, regarded them as significant enough to be included in Tannaitic thought and literature and of being recorded for posterity.¹¹

Somewhere along the way, however, there was a change in Simeon b. Zoma's life and in his thinking. This is divulged, rather guardedly, in the *PRDS*¹² incident as recorded in the rabbinic sources. The various versions¹³ differ in reporting this incident, but both the tradition in the Babylonian Talmud and the Tosefta agree that "Ben Zoma looked and was stricken."¹⁴ The Rabbinic commentators explain "stricken" as stricken with insanity.¹⁵ Even modern scholars, such as I. H. Weiss and Louis Finkelstein, subscribe to this traditionally accepted point of view, and R. T. Herford maintains that Ben Zoma's orthodoxy was never disputed.¹⁶ However, other scholars with a more critical orientation and point of view have sensed that there is some mystery about Ben Zoma that cannot be dismissed simply by asserting that he went out of his mind. They insist that the sage was involved in some matter of a religious nature in which his interpretation or position went beyond the permissible limits of Judaism and contained elements which were not acceptable within the normative bounds of the Jewish faith.

The basis of this more profound and complex coping with the problem of Ben Zoma rests on the passage in which there is a direct confrontation between Ben Zoma and his master, Rabbi Joshua b. Hananiah

10. M. *B'rakhot* 1:5.

11. The Mishnah also records some opinions and sayings of Ben Zoma which are questionable in terms of normative Rabbinic theology.

12. The exact meaning of the term *PRDS* will be discussed *infra*.

13. *Hag.* 14b; P. *Hag.* II, 77b; *Tos. Hag.* 2:2.

14. *Ben Zoma he'iz v'nifga'*. The Palestinian Talmud as well as a Mss. of the Bavli in the British Museum apply this phrase to Ben Azzai. However, there can be no doubt that the reference is to Ben Zoma.

15. Rashi in loc. *Hag.* 14b, *nitr'fah da'ato*, "his mind was torn." So also Rabbenu Hannanel and MHRSHA. Hai Gaon, cited in En Jacob, in loc. *sheyaza miklal ha-da'at*. I. Abrahams in Soncino edition of the Talmud, *Hag.* p. 91, renders the phrase "and became demented," with a footnote, "Lit., 'stricken,'" following the traditional interpretation. In line with this also is his rendering of '*adayin Ben Zoma mibahuz*, "Ben Zoma is still outside," with footnote, "i.e., out of his mind."

16. I. H. Weiss, *Dor Dor V'dorshav* (Berlin, 1924), II, 125-126; L. Finkelstein, *Akiba* (Philadelphia, 1936), p. 164; R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (Clifton, N.J., 1966), p. 310.

and an exchange of dialogue between them. There are four versions of this incident which are here presented for comparative reference.

The version in *Genesis Rabbah*,¹⁷ the most recent version in terms of editorial chronology, reads as follows:

Once Rabbi¹⁸ Simeon b. Zoma was sitting in confused thought.¹⁹ R. Joshua passed by and greeted him once and a second time but he did not respond. At the third (greeting) he answered him in confusion. Said (R. Joshua) to him: "Ben Zoma, where do you stand?"²⁰ He replied, "I have been looking into this." Said (R. Joshua) to him: "I call heaven and earth to witness that I shall not budge from here until you let me know where you stand." (Ben Zoma) said to him, "I have been looking into the Mystery of Creation²¹ and there is nought between the upper waters and the lower waters except about two or three fingers.²² It is not written 'And the spirit of God blew,' but 'hovered,' like this bird which flaps with its wings so that its wings touch yet do not touch."²³ R. Joshua turned and said to his disciples, "Ben Zoma has gone." And only a few days remained for Ben Zoma in the world.

The account of this incident in the Palestinian Talmud,²⁴ somewhat earlier than that of *Genesis Rabbah*, reads thus:

Further, it happened with R. Joshua that he was walking in the road and Ben Zoma was coming towards him. He (R. Joshua) greeted him but he (Ben Zoma) did not respond. Said (R. Joshua) to him, "From whence and where to, Ben Zoma?" He (Ben Zoma) said to him, "I have been looking into the Mystery of Creation and there is nought between the upper waters and the lower waters except about the extent of an open hand.²⁵ It is said here²⁶ 'hovering' and it is said elsewhere,²⁷ 'like an eagle stirring up its nest, hovering over its young.' Just as 'hovering' in the latter case means he touches yet does not touch, so 'hovering' in this case means it touches yet does not touch." Said R. Joshua to his disciples, "Behold, Ben Zoma is on the outside." And it was not but a few days until Ben Zoma died.

17. Gen. *Rab* 2:6.

18. One of the rare instances where the title is applied to him, and this, in all likelihood, is an error.

19. The word *tohe* here used means confused or confounded. M. Jastrow, *Dictionary*, p. 1648, sub *t'he*, translates "sat gazing (deep in thought, absent-minded)."

20. The text as we have it reads, *meayin haraglayim* makes little sense if rendered literally, unless it is a deliberate distortion designed to conceal the real issue here involved. But see S. Lieberman, *Tosefta Kifeshuta*, to the passage in *Hagigah*.

21. *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, the technical term used in Rabbinic sources for the mystical speculation regarding God's creation of the universe, cosmogony, but here used merely with reference to the creation story in Genesis I. Hence the confused interpretation of later scholars.

22. Friedman's rendering in Soncino edition of the Midrash, I, p. 18, "fingerbreadths" is based on a misunderstanding of the true implications of this and kindred passages.

23. This does not seem to be a relevant answer to the question.

24. P. *Hag.* II, 77a, b.

25. This is an interpretation based on "the fingers" in the older sources, perhaps a deliberate distortion.

26. Gen. 1:2.

27. Dt. 32:11.

Here is the version of the Tosefta:²⁸

It happened that R. Joshua was walking on the paved²⁹ road and Ben Zoma was coming towards him. When he approached him, he (Ben Zoma) did not greet him. Said (R. Joshua) to him, "From whence and where to, Ben Zoma?" Said he to him, "I was looking at³⁰ the Mystery of Creation, and there is between the upper waters and the lower waters not even a hand-breadth. As it is said, (Gen. 1:2), 'And the spirit of God hovered on the face of the waters,' and it says (Dt. 32:11), 'As the eagle stirring up its nest etc.; just as the eagle flies over its nest, touching yet not touching, so there is not even a hand-breadth between the upper waters and the lower waters.'" Said R. Joshua to his disciples, "Ben Zoma has long since been on the outside." It was only a few days until Ben Zoma was taken away.

All three versions quoted above pose some questions that can not be answered with any degree of certainty. The accounts in the Palestinian Talmud and the Tosefta both imply that Ben Zoma was discussing the distance between the upper and lower waters, using terminology that definitely indicates breadth or dimension. His reply to R. Joshua's query as to whence and whither is no reply whatsoever but a seeming discourse on the *Ma'aseh Bereshit*. The version in Genesis Rabbah seems even more confusing because in it even the question which R. Joshua poses to Ben Zoma—*meayin haraglayim*—is as garbled as the answer, which, like the other two versions, specifies that Ben Zoma replied that he was delving into the Mystery of Creation, and his answer similarly goes off on the tangent of the upper and lower waters.

When we examine the account as preserved in the Babylonian Talmud³¹ we still find a mysterious dialogue between master and disciple, but containing clues that shed some additional light on what the discussion was all about. In all probability it records the original Tannaitic statement in its most accurate form:

The Rabbis taught: It happened that R. Joshua b. Hananiah was standing on a step on the Temple mount³² and Ben Zoma saw him but did not rise in his presence.³³ Said (R. Joshua) to him, "From whence and where to, Ben Zoma?" He (Ben Zoma) replied, "I was looking³⁴ between the upper waters and the lower waters and between the one and the other there is nothing at all except three fingers. As it is said, 'And the spirit of God hovered on the face of the waters,' (Gen. 1:2) like the dove that hovers on its young. . ."³⁵ Said R. Joshua to his disciples, "Ben Zoma is still on the outside."³⁶

28. *Tos. Hag.* 2:5.

29. Or, "public": *Istarta*.

30. *Zofeh*, perhaps in the sense of a prophet or visionary.

31. *Hag.* 15a.

32. This reference is somewhat difficult to explain, but it may imply a pre-destruction date for the incident.

33. As a reverent pupil or disciple should.

34. See note 30 above.

35. The words *veayno noga'at*, is a gloss, or perhaps an editorial insertion by the redactor of the Talmud.

36. *Mibahuz*.

The traditional interpretation of the phrase "on the outside" coincides with the traditional understanding of the term "and was stricken" in the *PRDS* incident, and was taken to mean that R. Joshua declared Ben Zoma to be out of his mind, a view adhered to by some traditionally-oriented modern scholars as well.³⁷ More critical and analytical scholars, however, understand the phrase "on the outside" as referring to a heresy of one kind or another which would place Ben Zoma theologically outside the pale of Judaism.

Heinrich Grätz was the first to point out that the flaw in Ben Zoma was a religious deviation from Judaic belief. He approaches the subject rather cautiously, knowing that his own interpretation was a departure from the traditionally accepted position with regard to Ben Zoma and, hence, might be attacked by the thoroughgoing traditionalists. But he finds a rationale and a defensive justification for his point of view in R. Joshua's contention that Ben Zoma was "on the outside," with a bit of hedging to cover the exposure. He observes:

This note of R. Joshua's has the utmost significance for us and gives us the right to probe deeper into the details. To begin with, we are obviously confronted here with Gnostic ideas and modes. For clearly the expression "the lower waters" here has the role of the hylec primordial water over which the spirit of God hovers, as the Gnostics used to explain it; although it is not clear how Ben Zoma establishes its relationship in combination with the upper water. In any event, Ben Zoma was misunderstood by R. Joshua . . .³⁸

Thus, Grätz is of the opinion that Ben Zoma became a Gnostic and strayed from Jewish tradition in accepting the doctrine of the eternity of matter, one of the main principles of Aristotelian philosophy, negating the Jewish view of *creatio ex nihilo*. Accordingly, Ben Zoma regarded water as the primordial, eternal hyle over which the spirit of God hovered and which God utilized in creation. Grätz, however, finds himself at a loss to explain Ben Zoma's linking the upper and the lower waters, and why he would maintain that R. Joshua misunderstood Ben Zoma remains a mystery. For, in the final analysis, it was R. Joshua who provided the clue to Ben Zoma's defection, although he does not spell out for us its precise nature. We have no right to assume anything other than the fact that R. Joshua understood only too well what Ben Zoma was driving at, and the theological position that placed him "on the outside."

According to David Neumark,³⁹ R. Joshua was a devotee of *Mer-kavah* mysticism while Ben Zoma veered towards speculative cosmogony. Neumark's position differs from Grätz, but elaborates and expands Grätz's theory, assuming that Ben Zoma regarded both the upper and the lower waters as constituting the eternal hyle, while the spirit of God

37. Such as I. H. Weiss and Louis Finkelstein. See *supra*.

38. H. Grätz, *Gnosticismus und Judentum* (Krotoshin, 1846), pp. 79-80.

39. D. Neumark, *Toldot Haphilosophiah Beyisrael* (New York, 1921), p. 72 ff.

was the form-principle, the emanation which fashioned the universe. The waters mentioned in the story of creation were assumed by the *Merkavah* mystics to be outside of the firmament and were considered to be solid, like the ice mentioned in Ezek. 1:22. Neumark contends that Ben Zoma departed from the theory of emanations by asserting that there was no distinction between the upper and lower waters, both of which constituted the original matter from which the spirit of God effected creation. This, again, would point to Ben Zoma's heresy as a belief in the eternity of matter and contrary to the Torah's position of *creatio ex nihilo*. Neumark's contribution to the problem consists in structuring the controversy between R. Joshua and Ben Zoma in terms of a conflict between the adherents of *Ma'aseh Merkavah* as opposed to the devotees of *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, for which there seems to be no evidence in the Rabbinic sources which do not consider the latter as heretical.⁴⁰ Neumark's introduction of the idea that the doctrine of emanations is involved here is an original contribution, though Neumark does not make clear its relevance to the Ben Zoma heresy, but it does provide the point of departure for Meyer Waxman's probing analysis of the problem.

Waxman⁴¹ takes sharp issue with both Grätz and Neumark. He points out that if Ben Zoma believed that the upper and lower waters were of the same essence he would not have insisted that there is a separation between them, albeit as minute as two or three finger-breadths or a handbreadth, a contention which implies that there is an essential difference between the upper and the lower waters. Hence, there would be two kinds of primordial, eternal matter, namely upper waters and lower waters, which does not make sense.

Waxman holds that the theological flaw in Ben Zoma was a Neo-Platonic heresy, and that it is not a question of the eternity of matter at all.⁴² Rabbinic cosmogony was not averse to the assumption that the primary element in the universe was water,⁴³ and from it God fashioned creation, but maintained that water itself was originally created by God *ex nihilo*, and was an emanation from the divine. The Neo-Platonic theory of emanations lends itself to an interpretation in which water is used as symbol for emanation, in which the upper waters constitute the form-principle emanation, sometimes also designated as "the spirit of God," and the lower waters represent matter, the very lowest in the scale of emanations.

It is along these lines that Waxman interprets Ben Zoma's words in

40. R. Judah Ha-nasi was a rationalist and tried to discourage mystic speculation and mystery religion of any kind. Cf. M. *Hag.* 2:1 a. e. But *Ma'aseh Bereshit* is incorporated in *Sefer Yezirah*.

41. M. Waxman, *Shimon Ben Zoma* (St. Louis, 1928), p. 13 ff.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

43. Cf. P. *Hag.* 77c. Also Gen. *Rab.* 1:5, where this is said of *tohu vavohu* in place of water.

the passage in question: I was looking into the *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, and there is not between the "upper waters"—that is, the emanation which is next to the very lowest emanation, which is the "lower waters"—but about three fingers, a minute separation. He bases his words on the interpretation of the verse: "And the spirit of God"—which is another symbol of this emanation, and since it is spiritual it includes the form-principle—"was hovering on the face of the waters, touching and not touching," that is, it produces matter from itself, and yet it is separate from matter, since they are not of the same essence. And in this manner Ben Zoma teaches us the application of the doctrine of emanations clear down to the physical matter, but only by means of suggestion or hint. And when R. Joshua heard these words which contravene the Biblical account of creation as understood in the Tradition, he said to his disciples, Ben Zoma is gone, that is, he has turned away from the Traditional path; or, according to the other versions, Ben Zoma is already on the outside, that is, he is on the outside of the accepted path. This concept was the ultimate at which Ben Zoma arrived after a considerable length of time, and it was shortly thereafter that he died.

Prior to this, according to Waxman, Ben Zoma expounded on two ideas that were more or less in keeping with normative Jewish thought, namely, that the voice of God assumed the guise of *Metatron* both at the time of creation and to Moses on Mt. Avarim;⁴⁴ and the creative process was effected through the *Memra*,⁴⁵ or the word of God, similar to the *Logos* of Philo. The latter is found in a homily on Gen. 1:7: "‘And God made the firmament.’ This is one of the verses by which Ben Zoma shook the world. He made? Didn’t they come into being by his *Ma’amar*? Hence, (Psalm 33:6), ‘By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all their hosts by the breath of His mouth.’" Waxman explains away the expression that Ben Zoma shook the world in that, prior to Gen. 1:7, God’s creative power is manifest by mere speech, "And God *said*,⁴⁶ let there be light, etc.;" then, in v. 7, for the first time, Scripture says that God "made," followed by the same usage in vv. 16 and 25. The earth-shaking aspect of this, according to Waxman, is the implied refutation of any conceivable anthropomorphism in the use of the term "and He made," which is merely an allegorical expression when used with reference to the deity. The support for this is to be found in the verse from the thirty-third chapter of Psalms, that not only the heavens but all their hosts, i.e., all the rest of creation, came into being by God’s word.⁴⁷

Saul Lieberman⁴⁸ focuses his interpretation of Ben Zoma’s devia-

44. Gen. *Rab.* 5:4

45. Gen. *Rab.* 4:6.

46. Italics ours.

47. Waxman, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

48. S. Lieberman, *Tosefta Kifeshuta* (New York, 1952), V, 1289 ff. has a thoroughgoing discussion of Ben Zoma on the basis of the original and secondary sources, manuscript

tion on the version of Genesis Rabbah 2:4 found in a manuscript from the Geniza, which is different from the printed editions of the Midrash, and not even acknowledged in the critical editions. He reconstructs the incident as follows:

When Ben Zoma failed to reply to the greetings of R. Joshua, the latter asked him in complete innocence whence he was coming, seeing that he was so engrossed in his thoughts as not to have noticed the greetings of his teacher. Ben Zoma answered evasively and rhetorically: "Nothing from nothing:"⁴⁹ that is, I am nothing who comes from nothing. Rabbi Joshua did not like this evasive answer; it indicated to him only that Ben Zoma's mind was occupied with questions raised by the Gnostics, pretending as he did that he had not understood the simple question of his teacher. The answer given by Ben Zoma was orthodox . . . but it betrayed his thoughts. Yet there was no sufficient basis to draw any definite conclusion from Ben Zoma's answer. Rabbi Joshua therefore repeated his question and said: "I will not budge from here until you tell me where the legs are from:" that is, I want a direct answer to my question. After Ben Zoma answered, Rabbi Joshua turned to his pupils and said: "Ben Zoma has gone." It is not quite clear what was wrong with Ben Zoma's answer. It appears from the context that Ben Zoma was talking about the Spirit hovering between the upper and lower waters, and that there was a very small interval between the waters. The Sethian Gnostics taught: "The Light is on high and the Darkness below, and the Breath between the two. This Breath which is between the Darkness which is below the Light which is on high is not a Breath like a gust of wind nor a gentle breeze . . . but it is like a perfume exhaled from an ointment, or a wisely compounded incense," et cetera. We learn from here that the Gnostics engaged in speculations about the nature of the Spirit hovering between the upper and lower waters. We now understand why Rabbi Joshua did not like Ben Zoma's second answer. The former's suspicions were strengthened by the latter's first answer which betrayed his preoccupation with the question: "Who am I and whence do I come?"

Lieberman's explanation of the episode is an intensive elaboration with extensive documentation on the thesis that Ben Zoma's dereliction was a Gnostic heresy, as first suggested by Heinrich Grätz. The flaw in this interpretation is Ben Zoma's statement in Ber. 58a in which he implies that he is the center of creation, not "nothing."

The problem of Ben Zoma is also discussed in Israel Efros' *Ancient Jewish Philosophy*.⁵⁰ He, too, is perplexed by the problem and strains to find wherein Ben Zoma was at fault. After citing the incident with R. Joshua, Efros continues:

We read and we are astonished. Wherein was Ben Zoma at fault? Was it not the doctrine of R. Joshua himself, as we have seen, that all draw from the upper waters, that "the clouds rise from the earth to the sky

material, etc. Also, in "How Much Greek in Jewish Palestine?" in *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), p. 123 ff.

49. "Lo meayin Rabbi." Lieberman's footnote (24) on this: "A good Epicurean phrase. . . . The Epicurean phrase was quite current among the writers and intellectuals of antiquity. . . . The twisting of the phrase in a quite different meaning is natural and understandable. . . ."

50. Israel Efros, *Ancient Jewish Philosophy* (Detroit, 1964), p. 56 ff.

and receive them as from the mouth of a waterbottle?" And after Ben Zoma, R. Levi also taught: "The upper waters are masculine, and the lower waters are feminine; and the former say to the latter, receive us, you are God's creatures and we are His messengers. At once they receive them." This idea, which also occurs in En. 54:8, is certainly reminiscent of gnostic sexual conceptions of spheres or aeons; yet the sages did not seem to protest.

But you must note that Ben Zoma conceives of the upper waters not as a physical element, but as *the spirit of God* hovering over the lower waters. Comparing this with the teaching of Simon Magus, the Samaritan gnostic, we will see the meaning of Ben Zoma's statement. The teaching of Simon Magus was as follows: From infinite fire there emanated mind and thought, voice and name, understanding and consideration. These six principles, with their infinite source, constitute the supreme, heptadic world. The middle world is also composed of three pairs, together with their source which is thought, or the holy spirit. These are heaven and earth, sun and moon, air and water. The lower world came into being by the holy spirit, which is found in its entirety in every principle and which hovered over the lower waters, even as it is said, and the spirit of God was hovering on the face of the waters. Thus, the middle world, in its chain of principles, ends with water, and the lower world begins with water, so that between the upper and lower waters there is not even a handbreadth. And the upper waters carry the holy spirit, and it is this which hovers over the lower waters. So, Ben Zoma's view becomes identical, even as to the verse to which it attaches itself, with the view of Simon Magus, the gnostic, concerning an emanated *creative* power. Hence R. Joshua winced: Ben Zoma is already outside.⁵¹

Efros brings to bear the passage in Gen. Rabbah 4:7 to support his contention that Ben Zoma believed that the Word, or the holy spirit as symbolized in the upper waters, was a demiurge that made the firmament, and this was an unacceptable position within normative Judaism. Efros' interpretation is original in that it associates Ben Zoma with the doctrines of Simon Magus, which is an interesting insight and deserves consideration.

All of these interpretations by some of the most capable Jewish scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries are in the right direction insofar as they recognize that some theological flaw developed in Ben Zoma's thinking. Each in his own right attempts to structure Ben Zoma's deviation from normative Rabbinic Judaism within the framework of the heresies of the period in which Ben Zoma lived. All of these theories are ingenious in terms of philosophical and theological speculation, but they are somewhat strained, being based on a phrase or two lifted out of the total context. They do not take into account the totality of sources that treat of Ben Zoma, nor do they understand all of the Ben Zoma references in Rabbinic literature which tend to point in the same direction. They ignore the most potent heresy of all which was developing with momentous power at the turn of the 1st century C. E. For, by the time of Ben Zoma, there had been a major breach from Judaism by Chris-

51. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

tianity. It never before had occurred to any of these great modern scholars that perhaps Ben Zoma had been infected by studying the Christian religion and that he might have succumbed to the lure of the new faith, possibly even to the point of adopting it formally. Nor did it occur to them that the Tannaim who were Ben Zoma's contemporaries and colleagues may have known this and, because Judaism was already threatened by the oppressive measures of Rome, decided that it might be best to keep the matter as quiet as they could, so as not to lend strength to the aggressive evangelism of the early church and its zealous missionaries who were working among the Jewish people.

It is my hypothesis that it is precisely this that became the best kept secret of the Rabbinic tradition—that Ben Zoma had converted to Christianity and became a professing Christian. He continued to walk and talk with the other Tannaim, who questioned him concerning his religious views, who plied him with queries designed to bring out the essence of his new beliefs, but he was never ostracized or excommunicated. His answers, as well as his simple statements, were recorded guardedly, in the primary Tannaitic sources, and his responses are usually oblique, cryptic, and sometimes indirect and deceptive. Both questions and answers are occasionally formulated in esoteric language which has to be restructured according to the principle of *Gematria* in order to be properly understood.

It was a time of Judaeo-Christian dialogue, and the confrontations between Ben Zoma and his associates, from a Jewish point of view, have come down to us sometimes overtly expressed, sometimes in concealed or garbled language, but always before our eyes to observe and to comprehend if we approach the subject with open mind and scholarly objectivity.

The hypothesis that Ben Zoma was a Jewish Christian rests upon certain basic assumptions that are evident in the structure of the Rabbinic tradition, principles which the sages would not violate under any circumstances, even when the strict adherence to them might not be in their own best interest.

Basic to Rabbinic thought is the immutable concept that the words of the scholar are sacred, that once a man has earned the right to be heard and to argue his opinion, his point of view must not only be respected, but is worthy to be preserved for posterity. No matter how unpopular such an opinion might be, it was made part of the oral tradition and, ultimately, was recorded in the literature. Although it might not be accepted as the authoritative opinion, it was, nonetheless, regarded as a sincere and valid expression of a dissenting point of view.

This would apply even to the Sectarian heresies which threatened normative Jewish religion.⁵² The Mishnah enumerates as those who have

52. There is a clear distinction between the outright idol-worshipper and the one who

fallen away from the true faith and, hence, shall have no share in the world to come—they who deny that the Torah is the authority for the resurrection of the dead, they who deny the divine authorship of the Torah, and the *Epikoros*.⁵³ R. Akiba adds, also, those who read from the *Sefarim Hahizonim*⁵⁴ and the faith healers.⁵⁵ Abba Saul also includes those who make magical use of the Tetragrammaton. The fact remains, however, that the opinions and the arguments of the heretics were quoted in the Rabbinic sources.⁵⁶ The heretic would usually adduce his argument from a Biblical quotation.⁵⁷

Simeon Ben Zoma was noted for his ability to utilize the Scriptural text, and his expositions and interpretations were regarded as brilliant, ingenious. His manipulation of Holy Writ was so clever that it may have earned for him the rather dubious distinction of being designated “the interpreter.”⁵⁸ In any event, his opinions were not suppressed even when they reflected a religious point of view not acceptable to the Rabbinic authorities and where they differed markedly, even heretically, from his Tannaitic colleagues.

The period during which Ben Zoma lived was so difficult for Judaism, which was threatened both by the heavy hand of Rome and by the insidious forces of religious sectarianism, that the Rabbis could not afford to be party to any public countenance of those forces which threatened its survival. Hence, while they did not oppress Ben Zoma personally⁵⁹ or suppress his opinions, in some instances they did conceal his thoughts and interpretations by the use of esoteric language and by the principle of *hafukh*,⁶⁰ which was a clever device of scrambling the letters of the exact phrases that were originally used so that they appeared to be something different, and to connote other ideas than the ones originally expressed. This is also the intent of R. Eliezer b. Hisma's statement that “*gema-*

seduces to idolatry, who incur the death penalty (M. *Sanh.* 7:10) on the one hand, and the various heresies which are usually designated *minut*, and are merely deviations from the Jewish faith.

53. M. *San.* 10:1.

54. Usually rendered, “Apocryphal Books.” I contend that this expression means “Essene Books;” the Greek *Essenoi* is the exact transliteration of *Hizonim*, with the Greek plural nominative ending for the Hebrew *im*.

55. M. *San.* 10:1.

56. R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London, 1903), has gathered many of these. Pp. 97–341 and Appendix to same.

57. Cf. *B'rakhot* 10a; *Eruvin* 101a; *Hullin* 87a; *San.* 38b; a.e.

58. M. *Sotah* 9:15. “When Ben Zoma died the *darshanim* ceased,” i.e., he was the last of “the interpreters.” Perhaps this was a satirical reference to Ben Zoma's use of Scripture for an unorthodox interpretation.

59. There is no evidence that Ben Zoma was ever excommunicated or mistreated. On the contrary, the Rabbinic principle which was applied to him is enunciated by Resh Lakish: “A *Talmid Hakham* who has become odious in his teachings (*shesarah*) must not be embarrassed publicly.” A variant reads, “must not be excommunicated.” *Menahot* 99b; *Moed Katan* 17b.

60. Cf. I. Broyde, “Anagram” in *JE*, v. I, p. 551.

triyaoth" are aids to esoteric wisdom.⁶¹ Our methodology must, therefore, involve the rearrangement of some words and phrases which the tradition has preserved in this recondite form, in order to arrive at a close approximation of what the original form or expression may have been.

It would have been invalid to follow this procedure had not the Rabbis themselves left us certain clues to the nature of Ben Zoma's deviation from normative Rabbinic Judaism. These are references, both explicit and implicit, to events and doctrines which are found in the New Testament, specifically in the Epistles of Paul and in the Gospels. We shall find these references rather lucid and unmistakable, and why they were overlooked heretofore by both Jewish and Christian scholars is as much a mystery as the mystery of Ben Zoma itself. Even Christian scholars competent in both Christian and Rabbinic sources, such as Herford, Strack, Billerbeck, Schurer, and Moore, were unable to grasp the references and to understand them in their true meaning, or to find in them any Christological implications.

Ignored in previous Ben Zoma research is the significance of the questions which were put to Ben Zoma immediately following the *PRDS* passage in the Babylonian Talmud, and several others in various contexts. For the time being, we shall examine the second question which is found in Hag. 14b, because it is the most revealing document, the main key to solving the riddle which confronts us. The text, as found in the most widely used editions of the Talmud, the Vilna, Romm and related editions, reads thus: "They asked Ben Zoma, Is a virgin who has become pregnant eligible to marry a High Priest? . . . He answered them . . . It is possible that she became pregnant while bathing."

This question sounds like one of Halakhah and so does Ben Zoma's answer (Hag. 15a). While it would be legitimate for Ben Zoma's contemporaries to investigate this Halakhic question as to whether a pregnant virgin is eligible to become the wife of a High Priest, the other Tannaim were well aware of the answer themselves, or if they were not it seems odd that they would address their inquiry to Ben Zoma when there were much greater sages in his day, such as R. Akiba and R. Ishmael, whose wisdom in Halakhah was far superior to his. Why ask Ben Zoma?

Light on this aspect of the problem is shed by a variant reading found in a manuscript dating from the 12th century, in the British Museum, supported by the Munich manuscript of the Talmud, in *Dikdukei Soferim*, *in loc.* as well as the printed edition of Salonica, 1520, all omitting the phrase "to a High Priest." According to these versions, the question propounded to Ben Zoma was, "What of a virgin who is pregnant?" This is not a question of Halakhah but of theology. The question can

61. M. *Avot* 3:18. Cf. also the terse comment of R. Akiba, one of the principals of the *PRDS*: "The safeguard of esoteric wisdom is silence." M. *Avot* 3:13.

be rendered, "Do you believe in the Virgin Birth?" And the reference is unmistakable, dealing with the birth of Jesus, one of the fundamentals of Christian dogma as found in the Gospel of Matthew 1:18-21.

Ben Zoma's reply is brilliant and clever. He does not provide a forthright answer, but only an oblique and implicit one. By saying that she may have become pregnant while bathing, what he said, in effect, was that a virgin birth is possible, and he thus also demonstrates his familiarity with Persian eschatology, one of the sources of the Christian virgin birth doctrine, in which Saoshyant, the savior of mankind, will be born of a virgin who will conceive the seed of Zarathustra planted in lake Kensava where she will be bathing.⁶² Since this Persian doctrine was probably a primary source of the Christian belief in the virgin birth, Ben Zoma's response is an indirect affirmation of his adherence to the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus, which had general acceptance in the Christian community at the time when Ben Zoma lived.

But this is not the only clue which the Rabbinic tradition has left us, pointing to Ben Zoma as a Jewish Christian. Another key passage is the version in the Babylonian Talmud of Ben Zoma's encounter with his master, R. Joshua b. Ḥananiah, discussed above, but on which I have purposely delayed elaborating until this point. In that passage there are several items of indisputable evidence that Ben Zoma was, indeed, a Christian. First, Ben Zoma does not show his master the respect due a teacher, for he does not rise to greet him, thus indicating that the Jewish sage and what he represented were no longer of primary interest to him, although it is likely that Ben Zoma still considered himself a good Jew, even as Paul the Apostle considered himself a Hebrew and a Pharisee.⁶³

Secondly, R. Joshua's question, "From whence and where to, Ben Zoma?" is religious in its intent, as Saul Lieberman and others correctly point out, although I cannot agree with Lieberman that this question was Epicurean and Gnostic, for thereby he imputes, by implication, that R. Joshua may have subscribed to an Epicurean or Gnostic approach, even in his interrogation of his pupil. I believe that the question simply implies that perhaps Ben Zoma, having begun his journey of faith with Judaism, and having strayed from the norm into Christianity, might now be prepared to return to the fold by means of repentance, for the gate of *Teshuvah* is never closed. This would be similar to Elisha b. Abuyah's statement to R. Meier (Ḥag. 15a):

After he became an apostate, Aher asked R. Meir, What is the meaning of the verse, Gold and glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for vessels of fine gold (Job 28:17)? He answered, These are the words of the Torah which are as hard to acquire as vessels of fine gold, but are as easily destroyed as vessels of glass. He said to him, R. Akiba, your teacher, did not interpret it thus, but rather, just as vessels of gold and vessels of

62. Bundeishn 32:8.

63. Acts 23:6; Philippians 3:5.

glass, though they are broken can be restored, so a Talmid Hakham, though he has sinned, can be restored (by means of repentance).

A similar implication could have been behind R. Joshua's question to Ben Zoma.

Ben Zoma's reply was an assertion, though veiled, that he was still a Christian: "I have been observing the upper waters and the lower waters and between them there is nothing except three fingers." The answer, like R. Joshua's question, is neither geographic nor spatial, and, though it may sound like Cosmogony it is not that either. What I believe it to be is a brilliant Midrashic innuendo that there is a Godhead consisting of three entities, that in the heavens and in the earth there are but three Gods. My reasoning is based on the Rabbinic tradition.

We must bear in mind that Ben Zoma was one of the most astute interpreters of Scripture, conversant with the Holy Writ on a par with the greatest sages of his generation. The key to his phraseology is to be found in Ex. 8:15, in the context of the plague of vermin. When Pharaoh's magicians marvelled at this feat of Moses and Aaron, they said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God," according to the Masoretic accentuation of the phrase *eḇba' elohim hi*. To a skilled exegete such as Ben Zoma, however, a mere shift of the accent from conjunctive to disjunctive permits a rendering of "finger is God." With subtlety in mind, Ben Zoma's reply to R. Joshua was that in all the universe, both upper and lower, there are but three fingers, that is, there are three Gods, the Christology being quite obvious to one who understood the exegetical base of his remarks.

But there is even more convincing evidence in Ben Zoma's continuing statement wherein he cites Gen. 1:2 as a proof-text: "'And the spirit of God hovered over the face of the water,' like the dove which hovers over its offspring." This cannot be other than a reference to Mark 1:9-11: "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, You are my Son, with you I am well pleased." The description of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the waters of the Jordan River, and the depiction of the Holy Spirit as descending from heaven and alighting upon, or hovering over, Jesus during the baptismal event is dramatic, and Ben Zoma's allusion to it is striking. The spirit of God of Gen. 1:2 is equated by Ben Zoma with the Holy Spirit in the Christian tradition as found in Mark, and the reference to the dove is clear and unmistakable.

The reference to "waters" by Ben Zoma also becomes obvious, since it points to the narrative of the baptism of Jesus and, hence, to one of the cornerstones of the Christian faith. The parallel which Ben Zoma draws, connecting the upper and lower waters, is an exegetical way of

indicating the divine, universal nature of the Christian baptismal rite, not only in relation to Jesus, but which Ben Zoma apparently had accepted upon himself. This, too, explains the cryptic reference to "water water" in the *PRDS* incident.

When R. Joshua heard Ben Zoma's reply, he knew precisely what Ben Zoma meant by his remarks, and could thus turn to his disciples and categorically state, "Ben Zoma is still on the outside," that is, Ben Zoma is still unquestionably a Christian.

If our hypothesis is moving in the right direction, and the version of this incident with R. Joshua as recorded in the Babylonian Talmud is the authentic one and preserves the original Tannaitic tradition concerning it, then it is clear that the other versions contain distortions which have crept into the account. Perhaps later editors or reporters were not fully aware of the true implications of the language of the Baraita, and modified the terminology to feign originality of their own. Thus, there is a corruption of the vital terms that the Baraita used, and the original "three fingers" becomes "two or three fingers" or "a span" or "a handbreadth." And the dove, which is essential to the entire picture, becomes "the eagle" or "the bird." Or, it is possible that the distortions in the other versions were deliberately contrived in order to conceal the real characteristics of Ben Zoma's waywardness in adopting Christianity, which the tradition purposely wanted to be kept as a secret.

If my Ben Zoma hypothesis is moving in the right direction, then we must also reassess the *PRDS* Baraita.⁶⁴ The traditional vocalization of the word is *Pardes*, from the Greek *paradeisos*, meaning "garden," hence, the garden of speculative theosophy, or esoteric philosophy.⁶⁵ My hypothesis is that there is a reference to Christianity in this Baraita. Assuming that Ben Zoma's dereliction was his adoption of Christianity, which the Rabbis sought to conceal, something startling emerges from this passage. We can retain the consonants of the word *PRDS*, but we must reconsider its vocalization, which had never before been questioned by any Talmudic authorities. I propose that, instead of *Pardes*, it be read *Parados*, the Hebrew rendering in apocopated form of the Greek word *Paradosis*, which was the term used extensively by Christians, in the second century and thereafter, to apply to the authoritative tradition or transmission of an authentic doctrine concerning the life of Jesus and the early teaching of the Church, with special reference to the materials which subsequently were incorporated into the writings of the New Testament.⁶⁶ What the Baraita tells us is that the four made a probing study of Christian origins and beliefs.

64. *Hag.* 14b.

65. Cf. Jastrow, *Dictionary*, v. II, p. 1216a.

66. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 1014 ff. sub *Paradosis*.

It lies beyond the scope of this article to treat the matter in greater detail.⁶⁷ Suffice it to say that there are, in addition, Ben Zoma references to the Last Supper, the Crucifixion and Resurrection, Christian Baptism, Original Sin and Jesus as God Incarnate in human form.

What treatment did Ben Zoma receive at the hands of his colleagues, seeing that he was a Christian? The Gemara to M. Menahot 11:4, which contains a Christological reference by Ben Zoma,⁶⁸ has this comment: "Rabbi Simeon b. Lakish says, A *Talmid Hakham* who has become wayward in his faith must not be publicly put to shame (variant, excommunicated), as it is said (Hos. 4:5), You shall stumble by day, and the prophet also shall stumble with you, by night. Conceal it as the darkness of the night," i.e., keep it a secret. (Men. 98b)

To summarize: Ben Zoma, a Jewish sage of the Tannaitic period, who lived during the latter part of the first century and the early part of the second century, mentioned prominently in the Talmud, seems to have been attracted to Christianity and, likely, became converted to the Christian faith. His words, even when they are Christological, were preserved in the Talmudic tradition, although at times in esoteric fashion.

From the Talmudic sources we learn that Ben Zoma was never excommunicated or even embarrassed or humiliated by his associates, the Rabbis of the period, though they took exception to and disagreed with his theological views. On the contrary, he was treated by them with sensitive consideration.

67. This study is a portion of a book being prepared by the author.

68. "God has a face," i.e. He has the physical form of a human being, He became incarnate in Jesus.

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Jewish History and American Education

EGAL FELDMAN

IT COMES AS A SURPRISE TO OBSERVE HOW NEGLECTED the subject of Jewish history is on the campuses of American colleges and universities. Apart from at a few of the larger, more prestigious institutions, Jewish history is apparently not considered a subject fit for inclusion in the traditional liberal arts curriculum. And even in the few places where it has been made available, it is more likely to be found, not as part of the program of the department of history, but more often as an offering of a division of Judaic studies or offered through an off-campus arrangement with a student religious organization.¹

When one considers the attraction that the general subject of "history" has for American-Jewish students, this discovery becomes even more curious. As historians, American Jews have achieved a distinction out of proportion to their numbers.² They hold academic chairs of high rank, they review books in the distinguished journals and they present papers at major historical conventions. As a group, they have made great contributions to the teaching and writing of general history, but, sad to say, rarely to Jewish history. It seems that American-Jewish historians, with a few notable exceptions, are interested in everyone's history but their own.

Could it be that, because of the low status of the subject in the historical market-place, they conceal their interest? Recently, the term "Marrano-Professors" has been applied to a number of Jewish scholars.³ One is almost tempted to accept this designation after observing the deep interest displayed by American Jews in such areas as "the history of immigration," "the history of ethnic groups," "Black history," "the history of labor," "the history of prejudice,"—convenient subjects to which the Jewish experience can be vicariously related, without being identified.

But Jewish history is not a subject only for Jews. The history of the Jewish people lies at the root of civilization. From Jesus to the Crusades to the Holocaust, it is a subject difficult to avoid. We meet the Jew

1. In this connection see, Leon A. Jick, ed., *The Teaching of Judaica in American Universities: the Proceedings of Colloquium* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1970).

2. This is my impression from perusing the *Dictionary of American Scholars: A Biographical Directory*, Vol. I, *History* (New York: Jaques Cattell Press, 1969).

3. See Steven S. Schwarzchild, "'Marrano' Professors of Jewish Studies," *Association for Jewish Studies Newsletter*, Vol. II (April, 1971), pp. 1, 5-6.

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at every critical turning point in human history: the rise of Islam, the Spanish Inquisition, the Reformation, the Dreyfus case. The Jewish intellect—Spinoza, Marx, Freud, Einstein—determined direction in Western civilization. Yet the opportunities to study the subject in the American university barely exist.

This conspicuous lack is all the more puzzling when we observe the feverish desire today to balance the academic program to include studies of all ethnic groups. It seems, however, that the American Jew has not gained from this crusade, one which, incidentally, he has helped to launch and to lead. Here, too, it seems that the historian of the Jewish faith takes an interest in everyone's crusade but his own.

This is not to say that the battle for ethnic studies has not been worthwhile. On the contrary, the students who are today exposed to ethnic issues will be the citizens and teachers and professors of tomorrow. The new exposure will, in part, determine the attitudes and views which they, in turn, will transmit to their students and children. As appreciation of, and sensitivity to, minority group problems spreads, to that degree will prejudice and ignorance be diminished in the future. It is to be hoped that their children and students will grow to be more tolerant and understanding of human differences. But is this not all the more reason for the inclusion of Jewish history in the liberal arts curriculum?

What is most unfortunate, however, is that Jewish youngsters grow up in America knowing little about their own past. We know, from listening to arguments from the proponents of Black history, how important it is for the psychic health of youngsters to acquire a knowledge and appreciation of their people's heritage. For American Jews the dose of history received in the traditional Sunday School is hardly sufficient. In the majority of cases, the teachers are not trained to teach history. Besides, the time allotted to the subject is far too short. And even if the time were sufficient and the teachers were properly prepared, most children attending Sunday Schools are too young to grapple with the ideas and concepts of the Jewish past. We know, for example, that prior to the age of eleven a sense of chronology is rarely developed. A child is mentally unable to visualize points of time on a chronological scale.⁴ The difference between "250 years ago" and "350 years ago" is a difficult notion for a youngster to grasp. During the years of childhood, "history" can consist, therefore, of little more than a series of stories and biographical sketches of olden times and far-away places. But the richness of history, especially Jewish history, lies in the development of ideas. The theme of Jewish history, unfortunately, is not for children.

4. Carl G. Gustavson, *A Preface to History* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 12-14.

If Jewish history is a subject worthy of mature scholarly attention, why, then, is it absent from the University?

The answer is found in the intellectual environment in which American higher education has developed. The chief ingredients of this evolution, especially as it pertains to the teaching of history, are: A) the church, B) the Enlightenment, C) the principle of separation of church and state, and D) the influence of German historical scholarship. Each of these helped fashion the foundation of the American university and each, in its own unique way, militated against Jewish history from becoming a legitimate part of the American curriculum. Let us briefly examine each of these ingredients.

A) *The Church*

The American college and university is a product of the church. With the exception of the University of Pennsylvania, each of America's colonial colleges was originally designed to train ministers to serve the various denominational Protestant churches. Harvard and Yale were Congregationalist; Brown was Baptist; Princeton was Presbyterian; Columbia, and William and Mary were Anglican, and Rutgers was Dutch Reformed.⁵ Even the non-sectarian, state-supported institutions of higher education, founded early in the nineteenth century, were, in the majority of instances, dominated by a board of trustees and a president professing a very particular religious point of view. Indeed, until late in the nineteenth century and, in a good many cases, early in the twentieth, the typical college president was a Christian minister, and the typical college faculty mirrored the religious point of view of its board of trustees.⁶

Interestingly, because of the religious orientation of these early schools, so-called "Jewish" subjects were included in their programs of study. But these offerings, usually "Hebrew" and "Old Testament," were not designed to acquaint students with the traditions of the Jewish people. On the contrary, their purpose was to introduce prospective ministers and maturing Christians to the sources of the New Testament. Jewish subjects were important only in so far as they served as an intellectual bridge between paganism and Christianity. As a legitimate field of study, post-Biblical and, later, Jewish history, was not a relevant subject in the early university.

What should also not be overlooked is that to the classical Christian mind a history of the Jewish people is a non-existent subject. With the coming of the Christian savior, the Jewish people, as an historically

5. Frederick Rudolph, *The American University: A History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), pp. 1-13.

6. Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: the National Experience* (New York: Random House, 1965), pp. 153-60.

viable group, ceases to function. Its ideas, its writings, even its chosenness, were all brought to a final consummation with the coming of Jesus. Judaism was absorbed into the body of the new Church, which now claimed the Jewishness of the ancient Hebrews.⁷ In this sense, Jewish history, is, in fact, Christian history. If a subject does not exist, how, then, can it become a field of study for scholars?

B) *The Enlightenment*

Thanks to the genius of such thinkers as Baruch Spinoza, Isaac Newton and others, another major force entered into the makeup of American higher education—the Enlightenment. This seventeenth and eighteenth century movement, which popularized the notion that men and the universe which they inhabit are subject to immutable and rational laws of nature, had a tremendous impact on the direction of thought of the entire western world. Its influence on early American thinking was particularly strong. With the Enlightenment's stress upon human reason and the power of rational thinking in matters of science, religion and politics, it served as a particularly handy tool and a convenient rationalization for those who were planning a movement for independence and a republican revolution. Eighteenth century Americans were children of the Enlightenment, and the political and social institutions which they developed reflected the temper of that age.⁸

The principle and first victim of the Enlightenment was the church. That institution has still not recovered from its blows and, perhaps, never will. The proponents of the Enlightenment viewed the church as an irrational institution and, therefore, unnecessary. For that matter, all major faiths—Christianity, Islam and Judaism alike—were viewed as mass superstitions, conspiracies to enslave the minds and blind the eyes of mankind. Jews, whose religious establishment lacked power and was hardly visible, did not immediately suffer from this assault. On the contrary, the Enlightenment marks a major step in the liberation of the Jewish people. Ghetto walls crumbled and, for the first time, civil rights were granted to Jews in many western countries.

Universities also gained in esteem because of the Enlightenment. In a certain sense they replaced the churches and cathedrals as the new temples of reason. Their programs of study were now tilted more heavily in the direction of science and other non-sectarian subjects. Today's university is as much a product of the Enlightenment as it is a product of

7. For an interesting discussion of the origins of this theme see, Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Vol. II (New York and Philadelphia: Columbia University Press and the Jewish Publication Society of America, Second Edition, 1952), pp. 136–37.

8. Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Second Edition, 1943), pp. 103–106.

the church. But the Enlightenment also prevented the subject of Jewish history from achieving a respectable status in the university. To the enlightened generation the story of the Jewish people was little more than the history of a superstition, hardly a fitting subject to be included in a temple of reason, dedicated to science, truth and common sense.⁹

C) *Separation of Church and State*

One result of the Enlightenment which is of special significance to Americans is the almost religious adulation accorded to the principle of separation of church and state, enshrined in our Constitution and in the constitutions of all of our states. The doctrine has become almost sacrosanct and any effort to circumvent it elicits cries of agony and protest from Jews and Christians alike. Americans are a religiously fragmented people and view this principle of the separation of church and state as a protective shield designed for their respective religious points of view. Only Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jews have rejected the principle, largely because of their desire for public support for parochial education. In general, however, American Jews have been among the staunchest upholders and defenders of the separation of church and state.¹⁰

Such support, however, militated further against the inclusion of subjects of Jewish interest in the educational agendas of publicly supported institutions of higher learning. Unlike Black history or Chicano, or American Indian history, Jewish history is the history of a religious people. To insist on the public support of a sectarian subject, it is sometimes argued, might open up a Pandora's box of academic abuses. What is to prevent other religious groups from including the histories of their particular persuasions in American universities?

The difficulty with this kind of argument is that it is based upon an erroneous assumption. The history of the Christian people has already been injected into the programs of study of our universities. Christians and non-Christians alike, in the course of their "non-sectarian" academic experience, absorb a heavy dose of Christian knowledge. The history of the Christian people is impossible to avoid even in the traditional introductory survey courses of western civilization and American history. Topics treating the rise of Christianity, the Papacy, the Crusades, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Puritanism, Quakerism, Mormonism and the Great Awakenings are part of the very fabric of European and American experience. Any anxiety that the addi-

9. In this connection see, also, Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and The Jews* (New York and Philadelphia: Columbia University Press and The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), especially Chapter 9.

10. See my comments in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. V (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), pp. 544-45.

tion of Jewish history into the curriculum might invite demands from the Gentile world for equal time is, therefore, unjustified. Under the protective umbrella of the separation of church and state, the Gentile world has already achieved more than equal time, while the Jewish people, who have fought hard to maintain this principle are, at least from the point of view of "Jewish history," its victims. Under the guise of non-sectarian history, a grounding in the history of Christendom is offered to college students of all faiths, while the history of the Jews continues to remain a mystery.

D) *German Historical Scholarship*

The American historical profession owes a great debt to nineteenth-century German historical scholarship.¹¹ Most of the writing and teaching that goes on in the college and university classroom today is, to some degree, fashioned after the methodology designed by von Ranke, von Treitschke and others. Many of the early nineteenth century American historians completed their graduate training in German universities and brought from them ideas and concepts which have formed the basic, guiding principles in the teaching and writing of history in the United States. A number of these ideas may also be included in the baggage of obstacles to the recognition of Jewish history.

Consider, for example, the view, quite popular about three-quarters of a century ago, at a time when university history programs were being fashioned into their modern form, that the significant core of human experience lies in the political, diplomatic and military evolution of the state. In accordance with this outlook, Jewish history, being largely an account of a stateless people, powerless from a military point of view, and possessing no diplomacy to speak of, could hardly count as a subject to be taken with any seriousness.

Even more damaging was the Germanic position that civilized society is a result of the gradual flowering of the Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon people. As is well known, this racial view of history was quite popular in American universities not very long ago, and is not totally absent even today.

Such notions, however, are out of date and out of tune with the present generation. The time has come to change our attitude about the subject of Jewish history. The catastrophic events of the recent past dictate it. We cannot allow the next generation, Jew or Gentile, to grow up ignorant about the Jewish people. My own experience also indicates that there is a popular demand, even an overwhelming curiosity, among college students about the Jewish past. It is time that American colleges

11. Harvey Wish, *The American Historian: A Social-Intellectual History of the Writing of the American Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 86-87.

and universities, through the personnel of their departments of history, recognize this demand and make provisions to satisfy it.

At stake is not merely the desire to retrieve forgotten episodes in the story of mankind for the edification of undergraduates. The issue is of far greater consequence—the survival of the Jewish past and, with it, the survival of the character of the next American-Jewish generation.

One leafs in vain through current editions of “Western Civilization” text books, searching even for a brief, but meaningful, comment about the Jewish people. Even the word “Jew” is rarely mentioned. About the Talmud and its sages there is an impenetrable silence. Christianity surges forth from these books as the towering idea of the early centuries, but with its Judaic roots carefully trimmed. Ethics and charity are presented to the students as the gifts of the early church to mankind. Any reference to Maimonides and his contemporaries is skilfully avoided. Our cherished concepts of democracy, individual freedom and equality before the law continue to be classed as Anglo-Saxon virtues, unrelated to their Judaic foundations. Sordid themes of man’s inhumanity are found in abundance, but they rarely involve the Jewish people. Jews do not count as victims of the Crusades. The “Blood Accusation,” or the “Jewish Badge of Shame,” are terms barely recognized. Even the designation “Holocaust” rarely appears in print.

Is it surprising, then, that so many Jewish youths grow up ignorant of their heritage, are puzzled about the historic roots of Zionist aspirations, are confused about the role of Israel in the world, question the degree of intensity of Soviet anti-Semitism, and dismiss the Holocaust as an irrelevant issue for their age?

Historiographical habits will resist change. But, for the present, at the very minimum, “survey” offerings in Jewish history should be made available to college and university students, preferably by the departments of history of all institutions of higher learning in the United States. As a subject, the history of the Jewish people belongs side by side with the accounts of other peoples. It is a legitimate field of historical inquiry and ought not to be segregated to off-campus programs of Judaic Studies. Public accessibility and availability are of the utmost importance. An arrangement of this sort would also stimulate interest in the field among college history students, provide employment for Jewish scholars and produce a more sizable crop of professional Jewish historians, a group that is lacking in numbers, though not in prestige, in American society today. But, most important, it will contribute to the survival of the coming generation of American Jews.

Mendelssohn's Redefinition of Judaism—Tension and Solution

NOAH H. ROSENBLOOM

THE MODERN JEW LIVES IN TWO WORLDS: ONE, centripetal, circumscribed by the covenant of his forefathers, the other, centrifugal, forced outward by the universalizing influence of the twentieth century. This ambivalence can be traced back to the Renaissance. The world of the Middle Ages was conceived of exclusively in religious terms and determined by creedal doctrines. One result of this was a polarization of the Jewish and Christian worlds into two antithetical domains, each of which was monolithic and all-comprehensive. Except for limited economic contacts, each was autarchical in every respect.

The Biblical background of Judaism and Christianity made the construction of this antithesis inevitable. Since their common substratum made transversion a possibility, a danger about which the faithful in both domains were very apprehensive, so the antithesis had to be fostered with all the theological, political, social, economic, and psychological means available—the demonological not excluded.

Each domain felt itself menaced by the other's existence. The disparity in number of the Jews, by comparison with the overwhelming majority of the Christians, was no comfort to the latter, considering the hosts of demons the former could marshal. The Christian menace to Jewish existence did not need any demonological phobias. Its reality was sufficiently sinister and diabolic, and its consequences more disastrous.

Engulfed in a climate of implacable hostility, the Jews were compelled to regard anything outside the confines of the ghetto with suspicion and fear. Anything not exclusively Jewish was, *ipso facto*, non-Jewish, hence—in terms of antithesis—anti-Jewish. Rejected by the non-Jewish population and restricted to the narrow limitations of the ghetto, the Jews developed a tendency toward exclusiveness, separateness, and isolation. They transformed the ghetto into a religio-cultural *imperium in imperio* with its socio-economic concomitants. The walls of the antithesis grew taller, harder, and thicker with the passage of time, and made any intellectual dialogue between Jews and Christians, other than coercive disputation, impossible and inconceivable.

Gradually and imperceptibly, however, this sense of estrangement between the Jewish and Christian worlds, intellectually polarized despite

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their geographic proximity, began to wane. At first, the contacts were confined strictly to the formal economic domain, but, gradually, they began to extend beyond these boundaries.¹ Slowly there began to emerge a new area which appeared theologically neutral. Among the various factors responsible for its emergence was the Enlightenment, with all the complexity of its ideas. Men began to read works dealing with history, art, literature and science in which the *odium theologicum* was manifestly absent. The limited world in which they lived expanded, and knowledge about the lives, views, cultures, and practices of other people became a source of interest and fascination. As a result, a tendency developed to compare the ancient cultures with the indigenous one, thus unconsciously suggesting a re-evaluation of views heretofore uncritically professed and considered sacrosanct.

While these changes drove some German Christians into the confessionally neutral area, certain socio-economic forces propelled some German Jews into it also. The rise of capitalism, with its intensification of economic relations between Jews and Christians, accelerated social contacts and cultural interpretation. As a result, Jews who were not overly concerned with exhibiting their religious singularity, and Christians who demonstrated discretion about their confessional differences, met for the first time for purposes that were other than merely economic.

The emergence of this neutral domain enabled the Christian Lessing and the Jew Mendelssohn to meet, to establish amicable relations, and to engage in discussion on a great variety of subjects without confronting each other either confessionally or theologically. They implicitly agreed that this neutral domain was sufficiently wide for both to enjoy their similarities without having to accentuate their differences. They also tacitly agreed that sojourners in this neutral zone possessed two aspects: a denominational, which remained antithetical, and a humanistic, which was correlative. The former was restrictive, exclusive, and circumscribed; the latter was liberal, dialogical and universal. In the denominational aspect, the differences rigidly persisted as before, permitting no encounter and no concessions. In the humanistic aspect, however, there was accord, affinity, and identity of interests. Nevertheless, the very fact that there was a common ground upon which men, professing different religions, could meet, was bound to have a salutary effect on religious tolerance. Even when these men did not endorse the doctrinal differences of the others, they could be tactful about them. This attitude was a major achievement in the eighteenth century, and marked a radical departure from the attitude of the Middle Ages. For the first time in almost two millennia, Jews and non-Jews, if not Judaism and Christianity, could confront each other, not as antithetical creatures, but as men having a common denominator. For the first time, the centuries-old antithesis gave

1. Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (Oxford, 1961), p. 156.

way, in small measure, to the possibility of a symbiosis. A select minority of Jews and Christians recognized the existence of dualism, each on the part of the other, and by accepting this fact affirmed the possibility for their coexistence, the religious antithesis notwithstanding. This is clearly reflected in Mendelssohn's correspondence with some of his Christian friends. In a letter to Herder, he wrote: "Moses, the *Mensch*, writing to Herder, the *Mensch*, and not the *Jew* to the Christian preacher."²

However desirous Mendelssohn and Lessing were to preserve this neutral zone and maintain the symbiosis, the conservatives on both sides of the barrier were equally determined to destroy it and to retain the antithesis. The Christians, in particular, saw in the neutral zone an attempt to proliferate the denominational exclusiveness by enabling the Jews to enter the portals of Western civilization without surrendering their faith at its threshold. The Jewish conservatives were no less horrified, though they were not as vocal in expressing their displeasure.

The conservative Christians became particularly perturbed when Mendelssohn broadened the neutral zone to include a metaphysical problem, heretofore the exclusive province of Christian theology. In 1767, he published a treatise entitled, *Phaedon, oder über die Unsterblichkeit der Seele*. In it he attempted to validate the concept of immortality, not in theological terms, but on the basis of the Leibnizian philosophy. Such an endeavor on the part of a Jew scandalized Christian theologians. "The idea that anyone should attempt to demonstrate, with the exclusive aid of reason, a truth which they claimed man owed entirely to revelation, seemed an encroachment on the inalienable rights and prerogatives of their closed profession."³ That the attempt should have been made by a Jew was intolerable.

This antagonism was further exacerbated by the image of Socrates which Mendelssohn presented in his *Phaedon*, an image with which he himself apparently identified, and which he projected as the ideal of the future. The Christian conservatives were aghast and saw therein something insidious and ominous, to be arrested at once.

Cognizant of Mendelssohn's eagerness to avoid any Jewish-Christian confrontation or theological polemics, the conservatives were determined to compel him to take a position, hoping thereby to dislodge him from his haven of refuge and place him behind the impenetrable boundaries of antithesis. Aware that the antithetical outlook was still dominant and that public opinion would not tolerate any anti-Christian views from a Jew, they were intent upon achieving a theological victory by a psychological stratagem. They decided to challenge Mendelssohn to affirm or to deny publicly the truth of Christianity in clear and unambiguous terms. They expected to win by placing him in a dilemma, regardless of which

2. *Ibid.*, p. 169.

3. H. Walker, *Moses Mendelssohn, Critic and Philosopher* (New York, 1930), p. 90.

position he might assume. Were he to affirm Christianity, then, as a person of integrity, he would be obliged to embrace it. Such an act would be a remarkable vindication of Christianity, since the affirmation would come from the outstanding Jewish philosopher. It would also prove that no true philosopher could profess Judaism, since it was philosophically untenable. Furthermore, it was hoped, Mendelssohn's conversion would set in motion a wave of conversions among his fellow Jews. Should he, however, dare to reject Christianity, his action would be interpreted, in the light of the antithesis, as historic Jewish intransigence, thus justifying their own recalcitrance. Such an anti-Christian stand would make his position uncomfortable, even among liberal Christians, and he would then be compelled either to embrace Christianity or to retreat to the ghetto with the rest of the Jews.

However, the most important result which the Christian conservatives expected to gain from the challenge was the elimination of the potential symbiosis, which was their gravest concern. By placing Mendelssohn either among the avowed Christians or among the unrepenting Jews, they sought to raise again the barrier separating the two religious realms. The demarcation line between them would once again be defined in strict denominational terms, preventing any possibility of co-existence. As heretofore, no Jew would be able to cross into the non-Jewish world without presenting a Christian passport at the border.

This opportunity presented itself when Johann Casper Lavater, a Swiss Protestant minister, translated Charles Bonnet's *Recherches philosophiques sur les preuves du Christianisme* and challenged Mendelssohn openly to acknowledge or to refute Bonnet's proofs concerning the validity of Christianity.

In spite of his disinclination, Mendelssohn was now forced into the kind of dispute he had always tried to avoid.⁴ He was compelled, not only to justify the symbiosis, but to discuss the antithesis, distasteful as it was to him. An exchange of letters between him, Lavater, and Bonnet followed, arousing the attention of Western intellectual circles and evoking comments from men like Friedrich Nicolai, Johann Georg Hamann, Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, Matthias Claudius and Pastor Johann Balthasar Kölbele. In this animated correspondence, Mendelssohn, who attempted to ward off the immediate challenge, gained the sympathy of the liberals, who were provoked by the tactlessness of Lavater, by the dishonesty of Bonnet, and by his own unenviable position.

However, the victory was only psychological and, consequently, ephemeral. Mendelssohn realized that, while his opponents' maneuver had failed because of its poor timing, it was, nevertheless, a dangerous omen. He knew that if he were to succeed in implementing a symbiosis in a non-confessional area, he would have to deal candidly with the anti-

4. Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften*, V (Leipzig, 1843-45), 573.

thesis and its limitation, reluctant as he was to do so. A new demarcation line would have to be drawn between the neutral zone, where cooperation between Jew and non-Jew was possible, and even desirable, and the confessional zone, where such a rapprochement was both impossible and undesirable.

The distressing notoriety which the Lavater controversy evoked, and the deplorable acrimony which it engendered, affected Mendelssohn's physical and mental health. For years, he had harbored the illusion that the differences between Jews and Christians could be reduced to the level of the difference between Cartesians and Leibnizians. Like the latter, Jews and Christians could discuss their confessional disagreements in a calm, detached, and dispassionate manner, while agreeing on the essentials of the *theologia naturalis*. As a Jew concerned more with practice than with doctrine, he had maintained that, doctrinal differences notwithstanding, Jews and Christians could live virtuously and act morally.⁵ As an avowed rationalist, he had also ignored the fact that religion, unlike philosophy, was more emotional than cognitive. His encounter with the enlightened adherents of Christianity had, therefore, greatly disillusioned him, and plunged him into a deep and prolonged illness from which he recovered only slowly. The dispute had, however, a salutary effect as well. The confrontation with the Christian world was unavoidable. To his chagrin, Mendelssohn found that Lavater's view represented the opinion of the most enlightened Christians,⁶ for whom his hyphenated existence as a German-Jew was a challenge to the established socio-political order. It negated the still prevailing principle of *cuius regio eius religio*. The implication of this notion was clear: even if all Jews were of the moral and intellectual caliber of Mendelssohn, they could not expect any political emancipation. The German state was a Christian one, from which the Jews, by virtue of their religion, must be excluded. Both Jews and Christians were subject to different ecclesiastical authorities, giving rise to inherently conflicting views.

It took great courage for the modest and retiring Mendelssohn to assert himself in his declining years and state his views concerning Judaism and Christianity clearly, openly, and resolutely. It required even greater bravery for a merely tolerated *Schutzjude* to advocate the containment of the Church and the limitation of its ecclesiastical authority. He realized, however, that unless these issues were openly discussed and eventually resolved, the dream of Jewish emancipation would never become a reality. He feared that, unless the exact boundaries of the

5. Moses Mendelssohn, *Gesammelte Schriften, Jubiläum Ausgabe*, VII (Berlin-Breslau, 1929-38), pp. 317-18.

6. Otto Justus Basilius Hesse, *Schreiben des Herrn Moses Mendelssohn in Berlin an den Herrn Diaconus Lavater zu Zurich, nebst Anmerkungen über dasselbe* (Halle, 1770), pp. 100-101.

Church were defined, even the neutral zone that had been so laboriously established would be abolished by ecclesiastical power.

This vigorous stand Mendelssohn took in 1783 in *Jerusalem, oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum*. One of the immediate causes for its publication was a pamphlet, "*Das Forschen nach Licht and Recht in einem Schreiben an Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*," which had appeared in Berlin in 1782. This anonymously-written work, challenging Mendelssohn's loyalty to Judaism,⁷ argued that, since, in his introduction to Menasseh ben Israel's *Vindiciae Judaeorum*, Mendelssohn denied Jewish ecclesiastical authority and, particularly, the right of excommunication, he placed himself outside of the Jewish fold. The implication was clear; Mendelssohn was no longer a Jew and should take the next logical step and become a Christian.

Although the anonymous challenge was not of great importance, Mendelssohn sensed that the views expressed were shared by many. He also realized that his stand on the containment of ecclesiastical authority threatened the vested interests of Christians and Jews alike. A clarification of his outlook, therefore, became imperative. However, *Jerusalem*, in which he finally expressed his views fourteen years after the Lavater debate and three years before his death, did not mollify his opponents. On the contrary, it caused considerable agitation, since the implications that both groups drew from it were altogether different from what the author had intended. On many occasions those implications, and their consequences, were even antithetical to Mendelssohn's postulates and *Weltanschauung*.

Mendelssohn's primary aim in *Jerusalem* was socio-political in nature. "According to the canons of common sense, whose divine origin all of us must acknowledge, State and Church can claim no right in matters of faith except the right to teach, no power except the power of persuasion, no discipline except the discipline of reason."⁸ However, since Judaism was considered in liberal circles as a quasi-state juridical system,⁹ its position *vis-à-vis* the Jews and the State had to be clarified. The exposition of Judaism necessitated its comparison with Christianity. Thus, by the very nature of the problem, Mendelssohn was reluctantly drawn into a theological discussion. Theology, however, was only an ancillary aspect of *Jerusalem*. Its primary purpose was, as already indicated, socio-political. Furthermore, the theological arguments were never intended for the Jews, whose peace of mind Mendelssohn dared not disturb, but for the Christians, whom he wished to convince of the reasonableness of the idea of Jewish emancipation.

According to Mendelssohn, the Church and the State operate in

7. Jacob Katz "*Le-mi Anah Mendelssohn bi-Yerushalayim shelo?*" *Zion*, XXIX (Jerusalem, 1964), pp. 112-132.

8. Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem*, trans. Alfred Jospe (New York, 1969), p. 50.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

two distinct spheres and, consequently, ought never to conflict. The complete dissimilarity of these institutions precludes any possible contention between them. The State addresses itself to its citizens in legal terms. It demands that they comply with its laws, regardless of their inner thoughts or feelings. To attain this goal, the State has the right to employ coercion. The Church, however, addresses itself to its devotees in terms of intention. External compliance devoid of inner commitment is, therefore, meaningless. As a result, the Church cannot resort to compulsion. Considering, therefore, the dissimilarities in purpose and means between Church and State, Mendelssohn emphasized the clear demarcation line between them. Each institution remained sovereign within its own domain, and no encroachment of one upon the other was possible or desirable.

Thus, Mendelssohn went beyond asking for *de jure* recognition of the *de facto* neutral enclave existing within the State. Boldly, he advocated the transformation of the State into a religiously neutral zone where it could serve a religiously pluralistic society. Within its confines, all citizens, though of different religions, would abide by the fundamental postulates of the *theologia naturalis*.

The views expressed in *Jerusalem* were neither original nor novel. Some of them can be traced to Leibniz, Locke, Reimarus and Spinoza. The obvious novelty was that a Jew dared to deny the Church the right to interfere in the operations of the State. A closer analysis of *Jerusalem* discloses, however, more profound implications inherent in Mendelssohn's approach. While, theoretically, Church and State enjoyed absolute dominion within their respective domains, in actuality the Church was virtually impotent. In their polarization, the State was given a real terrain for its operations, whereas the realm of the Church was ethereal, and its functions were reduced to "nothing more than a kind of voluntary philosophical association."¹⁰ Mendelssohn not only prohibited the Church from interfering in the functions of the State, but deprived it of the power to enforce the rules in its own domain. Furthermore, he transferred the guardianship of the eternal verities of the *theologia naturalis* from the Church to the State. Affirmation of the existence of God, providence, and immortality, always the concern of the Church, were placed within the province of the State.¹¹ As an institution devoted to the welfare of its citizens, the State must protect itself against atheism and fanaticism. Both of these extremes Mendelssohn considered detrimental to the happiness of its citizens.

This paradoxical attitude cannot be attributed to mere inconsistency. The question of religion and the State was too vital for Mendelssohn to have overlooked such a glaring paradox. "Though he would not have the

10. Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Greater Judaism in the Making* (New York, 1960), p. 187.
11. *Jerusalem*, pp. 37-38.

State meddle with the religious beliefs of its citizens, he would, nevertheless, grant it the right to compel its citizens to believe in God, providence, and immortality."¹² Nor can his view be considered as a residuum of Spinoza's *ius circa sacra*.¹³ The differences between Mendelssohn and Spinoza in this respect were marked.¹⁴ We may assume, therefore, that his placing metaphysical concepts within the sphere of the State, rather than of the Church, was part of a deliberate design and not a careless error.

As already stated, Mendelssohn saw in the Church an obstacle, not only to Jewish emancipation, but to the entire spirit of the Enlightenment. Even if we do not accept the view that "Mendelssohn was less a devout Jew than an inveterate anti-Christian,"¹⁵ we still cannot deny that he hoped to curtail the authority and influence of the Church. It was, therefore, imperative for him to render the Church as ineffective as possible, lest it reassert itself and reclaim its power. Consequently, nothing must be left within the ecclesiastical domain that might necessitate man's allegiance to it. Since, in the Leibnizian-Wolffian universe of discourse, the fundamentals of *theologia naturalis* were important,¹⁶ Mendelssohn was disinclined to posit them in the domain of the Church. To do so would have enhanced ecclesiastical prestige and power. It would have subjected man's happiness and salvation to the capricious discretion of the Church. Such power would have restored ecclesiastical dominion over the individual and, eventually, over the State. In spite of his apprehension, he saw the State as being less pernicious than the Church.

Mendelssohn's attempt to divorce the verities of natural religion from the Church antedated *Jerusalem*. Already, in his *Phaedon* (1767), he had argued against the notion of *salus extra ecclesiam non est*.¹⁷ Immortality, he pointed out, was not contingent upon the profession of dogmas or the adherence to a given Church. Thus, Socrates, the hero of *Phaedon*, was assured of eternal life, though not a Christian. While this liberal view could have been reconciled with the Jewish tradition, it was revolutionary in Christianity.¹⁸ Thus, almost two decades prior to the appearance of *Judaism*, Mendelssohn had already deprived the Church of its most important weapon, its dominion over man's soul and the key to his eternal life.

12. Kaplan, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

13. Spinoza, *Theologico Political Treatise, Works of Spinoza*, I (New York, 1955), p. 245.

14. Yizhak Julius Guttman, *Dat u-madda* (Jerusalem, 1966), pp. 211-217.

15. Isaac Barzilay-Eisenstein, "Moses Mendelssohn," *JQR*, LII (1961), p. 77.

16. Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Boston, 1955), pp. 192-196.

17. This view, expressed by Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage in the third century, transcended the Catholic Church for which it was intended. It was also current among Protestants.

18. The Talmud presents two opinions as to the immortality of righteous Gentiles. According to Rabbi Eliezer, the righteous Gentiles will not have a share in the world to come. Rabbi Joshua, however, maintains that they will (*Sanhedrin* 105B).

However, in his endeavor to weaken the Christian Church, he also enfeebled the structure of Judaism. By liberating the Christians from the tutelage of the Church, he also released the Jews from the yoke of the Law. Mendelssohn, himself, recognized the basic relationship and interdependence between Judaism and Christianity. He had compared them to a two-story building, of which Judaism was the ground floor and Christianity the attic. "Christianity, as you know, is built on Judaism and would therefore collapse along with it."¹⁹ Mendelssohn apparently failed to realize that the converse was just as possible. While in architecture the destruction of the lower story is damaging to the upper, and while the ruin of the upper story may not affect the lower, in the construction of ideas both occurrences may be equally disastrous. Since Judaism and Christianity are both confessions, their *modus operandi* must be the same. Thus, by rendering Christianity obsolete in practice, Mendelssohn left Judaism defunct as well.

Had he accepted the logical consequences resulting from his conceptual polarization of State and Church, he might have joined the legion of Deists, to whom both religions were equally repugnant. Had he been willing to place Judaism on the same level as Christianity, he might have pleased not only his liberal supporters but, to some extent, his reactionary opponents. It would have implied that Judaism was no longer obligatory upon the Jews, thus removing an impediment to their emancipation.

But Mendelssohn had a dualistic nature, which he endeavored to disguise by his harmonious appearance. "In his belief, he was a child of the universal religion, and in his observance he was a member of the Jewish community."²⁰ Intellectually, he was a *Mensch*, but, emotionally, he was a *Jew*. As a result, he manifested a degree of paradoxicality, not only in his personal conduct, but, also, in his philosophy. Thus, when discussing problems of a universal nature, he treated them with the objectivity and detachment of a philosopher, but when the subject involved Judaism, he displayed the subjectivity befitting a theologian. Consequently, he was compelled to evolve an exceedingly tenuous outlook concerning the meaning of Judaism and its claim upon the Jews. Anxious as he was to facilitate the emancipation of the Jews, he refused to sacrifice Judaism for the attainment of that goal.

To explain his enigmatic attitude, he drew a distinction between the two religions. Judaism claimed no special cognitive ethical or redemptive truths received through supernatural theophany, unlike Christianity, which insisted upon the affirmation of dogmas. Judaism merely emphasized *geöffenbarte Gesetze* and not revealed religion.

19. *Jerusalem*, p. 58.

20. Julius Guttman, *The Philosophies of Judaism*, trans. David W. Silverman (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 300; Jacob Katz, *Masoret u-mashber* (Jerusalem, 1958), pp. 293-294.

I believe Judaism knows nothing of a *revealed religion* in the sense in which Christians define this term. The Israelites possess a *divine legislation*—laws, commandments, statutes, rules of conduct, instruction in God's will and in what they are to do to attain temporal and eternal salvation. Moses, in a miraculous and supernatural way, revealed to them these laws and commandments, but not dogmas, propositions concerning salvation, or self-evident principles of reason. These the Lord reveals to us as well as to all other men at all times through nature and events but never through the spoken or written word.²¹

Thus, as an exponent of the rational *Aufklärung*, he could not find any objection in affirming Judaism; it did not deal with the fundamentals of *theologia naturalis*, nor did it consider them its exclusive domain. These were eternal verities and needed no supernatural revelation. They were requisites to man's happiness and free and accessible to his reason. Indirectly, Mendelssohn criticized the Christian theologians who insisted upon the revelation of eternal truths. "Those who cling to this notion subtract from God's omnipotence the very thing they think they are adding to it. They assume He was good enough to disclose to men those truths on which their happiness depends, but that He was neither omnipotent nor good enough to grant them the capacity to discover these truths for themselves."²²

The specificity of Judaism expressed itself in its nomistic aspect and was addressed only to the Jews. Unlike the eternal verities, accessible to all men, the specific ones were neither indispensable to man's happiness nor necessary for his salvation.

Revealed *religion* is one thing, revealed *legislation* another. The voice that was heard at Sinai, on that great day, did not proclaim, "I am the eternal, your God, the necessary autonomous Being omnipotent and omniscient, who rewards men in a future life according to their deeds." This is the universal religion of mankind, not Judaism; this kind of universal religion—without which man can become neither virtuous nor happy—was not and, in fact, could not have been revealed at Sinai.²³

This nomistic concept of Judaism did not originate with Mendelssohn. The critics of Judaism, from Paul to Spinoza, always underscored its legal character, which they considered offensive. Neither Paul nor Spinoza, though both of Jewish descent, saw in the Law any redeeming quality. Mendelssohn, however, transformed this seemingly negative aspect into a positive one.

By addressing itself to man's actions, rather than to his intellect, Judaism enabled man to enjoy absolute freedom of thought. Unlike Christianity, which insisted on belief in irrational dogmas, Judaism permitted the unqualified reign of reason. To prove Judaism's discretion in this respect, Mendelssohn denied any creedal obligation in the Jewish religion.

21. *Jerusalem*, p. 61.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 68–69.

Among the precepts and the ordinances of the Mosaic Law, there is none saying, "You shall believe" or "You shall not believe." All say "You shall do" or "You shall not do." You are not commanded to believe, for faith accepts no commands; it accepts only what comes to it by reasoned conviction. All commandments of the divine law are addressed to man's will, to his capacity to act.²⁴

This shift of emphasis from faith to law, from conviction to action, and from thought to performance had great appeal in the era of the Enlightenment, when reason and freedom were highly praised. "This idea, so distant from metaphysics, thus allows neither conflict nor competition between reason and Judaism, and, according to Mendelssohn, gives the adherents of Judaism freedom of thought, because Judaism only prescribes the deeds of man, but frees his thoughts."²⁵

Nevertheless, Mendelssohn could not have overlooked the fact that, by accommodating the temper of the Enlightenment, he was sacrificing the spirit of Judaism. By shifting the emphasis from *Geöffenbarte Religion* to *Geöffenbarte Gesetze*, he admitted that the essence of Judaism was law rather than truth, that its concern was with externalities rather than with essence. Indeed, to Mendelssohn, obedience to the Law transcended mere perfunctory performance.²⁶ And yet, by admitting that the laws of Judaism have merely a prophylactic function, to protect their inner kernel, he considered them ostensibly extrinsic. Furthermore, by entertaining ideas of their eventual dissolution, he demonstrated their dispensability.

It is difficult to assume that Mendelssohn redefined Judaism in terms of legality only to accommodate the rationalists of the Enlightenment. There must have been an additional factor that impelled him to change Judaism, as Samson Raphael Hirsch aptly termed it, from *foi* to *loi*.²⁷

As already indicated, Mendelssohn wanted to save Judaism from the fate of obsolescence which he envisioned for Christianity. Had he stressed the fact that the intrinsic value of Judaism lay in its eternal aspects, he would have rendered it defunct. Unable to claim any special prerogatives in the sphere of eternal verities, natural and accessible to all men, Judaism would have been reduced to the same status as Christianity. It would have been acknowledged in theory, but rendered inoperative in reality. By redefining Judaism in terms of legality, he endowed it with the right reserved for the State. Like the State, Judaism had the right to ask of its followers compliance with its laws. By shifting the emphasis from faith to law, Mendelssohn courted the contempt of the

24. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

25. Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism*, p. 299.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 300.

27. "'La loi' und nicht 'la foi,' Gesetz und nicht der Glaube ist das Stichwort des Judentums, Geherchen, nicht Glauben und Hoffen und Beten macht den Juden zum Juden." Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Gesammelte Schriften*, II (Frankfurt am Main, 1904), p. 422.

antinomians but, at the same time, endowed Judaism with a validity which Christianity could not claim. Thus, when Mendelssohn was confronted with the dilemma of the continued opprobrium of Judaism as legalistic or its survival, he chose survival. He agreed with Spinoza that, genetically, the laws of Judaism were identical with the laws of the Jewish state. However, unlike Spinoza, he did not consider that the dissolution of the Jewish state terminated the obligation of the Jews to those laws. Only the laws inextricably connected with that state and contingent upon its existence became automatically invalid. The others, however, remained in force for all Jews until revoked by the Divine Lawgiver. Mendelssohn, therefore, stated:

⁵ I cannot see how those who were born into the household of Jacob can in good conscience exempt themselves from the observance of the law. We are permitted to reflect on the law, to search for its meaning, and occasionally, where the Lawgiver himself provides no reason (for a particular law), to surmise that it must perhaps be understood in terms of a particular time, place, and set of circumstances. Therefore, the law can perhaps also be changed according to the requirements of a particular time, place, and set of circumstances, but only if and when it pleases the supreme Lawgiver to let us recognize His will—to make it known to us just as openly, publicly, and beyond any possibility of doubt and uncertainty, as He did when He gave us the law itself.²⁸

However, despite Mendelssohn's subtlety, his position remained tenuous. He was still caught in the dilemma of defending Judaism or defending the Jews. By associating Judaism with law, he gave it validity, but at the same time he endangered the right of the Jews to political equality. Judaism seemed now to be operating, unlike other religions, in the same sphere as the State, both of which demanded external compliance with their laws. There was, therefore, the possibility that sooner or later the State and Judaism would collide. The position of the Jews as citizens of the modern State would be unenviable, since their loyalty would be questioned. Thus, by strengthening Judaism as law, Mendelssohn jeopardized the hope of the Jews for emancipation.

Apprehensive of such an argument, Mendelssohn offered the following solution. The State has the right, not only to enact laws, but also to enforce them by means of coercion. Judaism, when it was the law of the Jewish commonwealth, also had such power. In exile, however, it no longer has such power, and addresses itself to the Jews as a matter of conscience. The compliance of the Jews with the laws of Judaism is, therefore, voluntary.

Mendelssohn thus tries to allay the fears of the State that its Jewish citizens may prefer the laws of Judaism when they conflict with the laws of the State. He implied that, since Judaism has no sanctions, the laws of the State will be dominant. Realizing that this suggestion meant the surrender of the dictates of religion to the power of the State, Men-

28. *Jerusalem*, p. 104.

delssohn resorted to the Christian dictum, "Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."²⁹

Thus, Mendelssohn hoped to extricate himself from the dilemma of defending either the Jews or Judaism. He desired to defend both. By endowing Judaism with the characteristic of legality, he asserted its claim upon its adherents. By eliminating the aspect of coercion, he hoped to render it unobtrusive in the affairs of the State. Tenuous as his apologia was, he hoped that it would solve the most difficult problem confronting the Jews and Judaism at that crucial juncture of history, without sacrificing either.

But this palliative solution, so laboriously and ingeniously evolved, was of short duration. Six years after the publication of *Jerusalem* and three years after the author's death, a great socio-political upheaval took place—the French Revolution and the process of Jewish emancipation—rendering its primary political part obsolete and elevating its ancillary theological part to a position never dreamed of by Mendelssohn.

As evident from the tenor of *Jerusalem*, Mendelssohn considered Jewish emancipation remote. Its ultimate attainment, though assured, would be a prolonged and tortuous process; as an avowed rationalist, he was certain that reason would eventually prevail. Witnessing the status of the Jews in his native Prussia, which enjoyed the most enlightened government of all German states, he had to admit that the prospects were less than encouraging.

Mendelssohn thus viewed the evolution of Jewish emancipation as corresponding with the progress of the Enlightenment. The ultimate future of both was certain, but the road was slow and agonizing. He could not have envisioned the radical socio-political transformation that would be brought about by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars that shattered the stable world in which, and for which, he had written his apologia. The egalitarian forces unleashed by the cataclysm of the French Revolution leveled, not only the Bastille, but, also, the similarly impregnable walls of the Jewish ghetto outside of France's frontiers. As a result, the Jews were catapulted from their isolation into the seething cauldron of the late eighteenth century, and within a short period of time, Mendelssohn's painstaking philosophic efforts on behalf of Jewish emancipation became superfluous. Emancipation was not achieved by the rational and moral propositions which he expounded in *Jerusalem*, but was forcefully imposed by the bayonets of the French armies.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 110; *Matthew* 22:21.

Anti-Semitism and Jewish Historiography

ALLEN S. MALLER

ONE OF THE MOST DIFFICULT TASKS FACING A Jewish historian is the analysis and explanation of anti-Semitism. The attitude which he takes to this phenomenon will depend upon his conception of why men fight and hate in general, and on the kind of anti-Semitism that he experiences, both in his own lifetime and in his historical materials. The term, itself, is a vague one, used to describe everything from social exclusion from a country club to the mass murder of men, women and children. The historian, therefore, cannot find a single cause for anti-Semitism; he must find many causes, at least equal in number to the various kinds of anti-Semitism which occur in his historical study. Since historical causes are usually multi-dimensional and reciprocal and, since anti-Semitism is rarely logically consistent, he must not only find a number of causes but show their interaction. We shall consider the interpretations and explanations given to modern anti-Semitism by five Jewish historians in the light of their own experience and their historiography. In this way, we shall also see the development of Jewish historiography in the last century.

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Heinrich Graetz was born in 1817 in Posen, a Polish province of Germany. He studied in *yeshivot* until the age of nineteen, acquiring his secular education privately. He also studied for three years with Samson Raphael Hirsch, the leader of modern Orthodoxy in nineteenth century Germany. In 1845, Graetz obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Jena and, from 1854 until his death in 1891, he taught at the seminary in Breslau. His major work, *A History of the Jews*, was published in eleven volumes between 1853 and 1876, and became the standard which all later Jewish historians would either follow or react against.

Using terms and concepts similar to those of Hegel and his followers, Graetz regarded the survival of the Jewish people as due to its need to fulfill the life task by which it was held together and by which, in direst misfortune, it was comforted and preserved. According to him, the Jewish people were fully convinced that their sole importance lay in their possession of the law, and their vocation in the announcement of the truths of its salvation. The people existed only on account of this law and in order to be its exponent.¹

1. H. Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Philadelphia, 1895), V, p. 718.

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Graetz regarded anti-Semitism as the result of ignorance and superstition on the part of the masses, and of jealousy and bigotry on the part of the Church. Thus, he accounts for the blood-accusation against the Jews of Rhodes as a sort of conspiracy of the Christians in Turkey against the Jews because the young Sultan had conceded to them equal privileges among the subjects of his kingdom.² The famous blood-accusation in Damascus in 1840 is explained as follows:

The monks, chief among them a fanatical Jew-hater, Father Tusti, quickly caught up the suspicion against the Jews, hoping thereby to gain several ends. They could satiate their hatred against the Jews, suppress the inquiry as to whether Father Tomaso had indeed quarreled with Musselmans and reviled them, and finally a new martyr, slain by the Jews, would be added to their list of saints, which was always a source of profit.³

That modern, cultured and educated men could be anti-Semites was explicable only as an irrational quirk. He says that Voltaire hated all Jews because an English Jew caused him to lose money and a Prussian Jew sued him.⁴ In another case, he states that a professor had become a Jew-hater because an officer had given him a grudging salute.⁵ Graetz does admit that frustrated nationalism could be directed against the Jews, but even this he sees as unplanned and illogical.⁶ He could not, or would not, conceive that anti-Semitism might be fundamentally rooted into the national culture or into the state of society itself.

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Simon Dubnow was born in 1860 in a small town in White Russia, where he was educated in the traditional *heder*. He entered the official government school at the age of fourteen, but his failure in mathematics discouraged him from official university studies and he became an autodidact in western culture and Jewish history. In 1922, he left Russia and moved to Berlin, where he published his major works. In 1933, he moved again, this time to Riga, where he lived until he was murdered by the Germans in December of 1941. His major work, a ten-volume *World History of the Jewish People*, has finally been translated and published in English after a delay of many years, due to legal and financial complications.

Dubnow claimed that his work represented a new approach to Jewish history. Graetz had ignored the life of the people and of the nation to concentrate on its culture and its literature, its intellectual activities and heroic martyrdom. Dubnow claimed that the profound revolution in national consciousness, which characterized his age, would inevitably bring

2. *Ibid.*, p. 641.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 635.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 339f.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 360.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 528.

about transformation in the conception of the historical process as applied to the Jews. The secularization of the Jewish national idea would liberate historical writing from its previous commitment to idealistic conceptualizations. The theological conception, both of the Orthodox and the Liberal Jews, dominates the interpretation of Biblical history, as well as of medieval and modern Jewish history, and is based on the axiom that a people deprived of state and territory can play an active role in history only in the field of intellectual life, while in its social life it is condemned to being a passive object of the history of the peoples among whom it lives.⁷

Dubnow sees the new anti-Semitism as part of the reactionary movement after 1870 directed, not against Judaism, but against Jews. In France, racial anti-Semitism was imported from Germany, but was really more national than racial.⁸ The Poles resented Yiddish, the Litvaks, and the attempt to create a separate Jewish culture in Poland. These causes, plus election politics for the fourth Duma, led to a major boycott of Jewish enterprises in an attempt to push the Jews out of the economy.⁹ Defeated Hungary attacked the Jews for participation in the Communist Revolution.¹⁰ Dubnow, thus, sees anti-Semitism as a political problem between hostile peoples rather than between individuals (Graetz) or classes (Mahler). He fails to differentiate adequately between anti-Semitism in France where the Jews, as a small assimilated minority, are used only as a wedge for a major attack against another segment of society, and Poland, where the large Jewish population had a definite economic and cultural position which could be opposed for itself.

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Salo Baron was born in Tarnow, Poland, in 1895. He went to Gymnasium there, but received his graduate degrees at the University of Vienna. He was also ordained (1920) at the Jewish Theological Seminary in Vienna. He came to the United States in 1926 and, since 1930, has been Professor of Jewish History at Columbia University. In 1937, he published his three-volume *Social and Religious History of the Jews*, which, in its expanded second edition, now has fourteen volumes, but has not gone beyond the late Middle Ages.

Baron agrees with Dubnow that Jewish historiography has been dominated by idealistic conceptualizations. However, he argues that Dubnow did not greatly advance in this respect beyond his predecessor, Graetz.¹¹ Graetz had emphasized the spiritual and intellectual nature of

7. S. Dubnow, *Nationalism and History* (New York, 1961), p. 337.

8. Simon Dubnow, *Divrei Yemai Am Olam: B'kerekh Ehad* (Tel Aviv, 1952), p. 682.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 720.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 734.

11. Salo Baron, *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 78. His spe-

Jewish history by organizing all Jewish events, no matter how remote geographically, or how unrelated to each other structurally, within one chronological period in one chapter. Dubnow organized his material around the geographical center of Jewish life in each epoch in order to synthesize Jewish experience in national terms. Baron was, and is, interested in the analysis of Jewish institutions and social movements in their long-range development. His history is, therefore, organized topically, and each chapter may cover a period of decades and even centuries.

Baron lists numerous factors causing anti-Semitism. Politically, the dissatisfaction of the masses was often directed into anti-Jewish channels. In Russia, it even led to pogroms, phenomena which had not occurred previously. Psychologically, the very weakness of the Jews often provoked hatred. Religious prejudice was still alive, as the charges of blood ritual murders in Eastern Europe showed. The Jews, Baron indicates, were attacked by radicals because of their economic concentration, and by conservatives for their radicalism. In the nineteenth century, the Jew was attacked in Western Europe for his alienation from the national culture, while in the twentieth century he was accused of dominating and unduly influencing the national culture. Some anti-Semites went so far as to reject that Jewish heresy: Christianity.¹²

The growth of nationalism is also a major factor effecting the Jewish situation.

. . . in addition to the more or less constant religious antagonisms and some basic economic rivalries, one must pay close attention to the growth of nationalism as a major factor in changing Jewish destinies at all times, but especially in the medieval and early modern periods. One may almost speak of an "historical law" that before the Emancipation era, national states, that is, states in which the population was nationally homogeneous, sooner or later turned against their Jewish "subjects" and sought to eliminate this "alien" ingredient. At the other extreme were the multi-national states which actually considered their Jews as a valuable cementing force in helping to maintain their overall imperial unity.¹³

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Raphael Mahler was born near Cracow, Poland in 1899. Like Baron, he got his Ph.D. at the University of Vienna. From 1924 until 1937, he taught Jewish and General History in Warsaw, where his Jewish work

cific words are, ". . . in his actual description of the Jewish past he has no more succeeded in realizing his program than had Graetz in avoiding the pitfalls of the *Leidens- und Gelehrten-geschichte* which he himself had so bluntly denounced. Except for his artificial attempts at periodization, his forced quest for hegemony centers in various periods and, due to his own political 'autonomism,' his special attention to Jewish self-government, one finds in Dubnow's otherwise remarkable attempt at a new synthesis of Jewish history little that is a substantial advance over Graetz's still unsurpassed Jewish history."

12. Salo Baron, *Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York, 1937), vol. II, pp. 303f.

13. Baron, "World Horizons in Jewish History," *Simon Dubnow: The Man and His Work* (Paris, 1963), p. 35.

was carried on mainly through the Yiddish Scientific Institute (Yivo). In 1937, he came to the United States, but after the creation of the State of Israel he moved there, where he presently teaches at the University of Tel Aviv. In 1952, he published the first four volumes of his *Modern Jewish History*, which covers the period of 1780 to 1815. A one-volume (English) abridgement, entitled *A History of Modern Jewry*, was published in 1971.

If Baron presents us with a dozen reasons for anti-Semitism, Mahler finds only one: class warfare. The Jewish question in Poland was not solved, says Mahler, because the status of the peasant was not changed. The nobility despised the Jews, even though they needed them for their economic activities,¹⁴ but the peasants' interests did not conflict violently with those of the Jews. It was the Polish and Jewish bourgeois economic rivalry that was, for centuries,¹⁵ the driving force behind Polish anti-Semitism. Mahler's attempt to maintain that the masses were not really anti-Semitic and that the Poles did not cooperate with the Germans in the "final solution" is the result of his Marxist orientation. He does admit that, after the 1867 revolt, anti-Semitism came to a standstill for several decades, although we may assume that economic rivalry continued undiminished during this period. He also admits that Polish anti-Semitism was of a special character, due to Jewish national and cultural separateness.¹⁶

In an essay written in the post-Stalin era, and after living in Israel for ten years, Mahler abandoned this rigid socio-economic interpretation. It is true, he states, that anti-Semitism is caused by competition within a class and/or opposition from an exploited class, but these are conflicts which are continuous and do not, therefore, explain the rise and fall of anti-Semitism during different periods. Nor do they explain why, given the weakness of the Jews, anti-Semitism is restricted at all. Further, the anti-Semite does not distinguish between different classes of Jews, but hates all Jews.¹⁷ The real motivation, therefore, behind violent anti-Semitism is that Jews are useful as political enemies. They are used as a diversion for economic and political unrest.¹⁸ The Jews, Mahler continues, have been the prime scapegoats (and now are the traditional ones) because they are different in religion, customs, and economic function. The only solution to this problem is world peace and uniform class progress. Inasmuch as this progress is dialectical, advancing through opposition, there will be periodic conflagrations which will envelop the

14. Mahler, "Anti-Semitism in Poland," *Essays on Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1946), pp. 151, 156.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 149, 160.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

17. Mahler, "*Hagormim Shel Sin'at Yisrael V'kohoteha Hamaknee'im*," *Am Yisrael V'oomot Ha'olam* (Paris, 1962), p. 60.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Jews, and the ingathering of the exiles to a Jewish homeland is the only real solution.¹⁹ Events in Poland in 1968 would seem to be a perfect confirmation of the non-class warfare basis for anti-Semitism in a socialist economy where anti-Semitism is a political tool.

* * *

Howard Sachar was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1928, and received his Ph.D. from Harvard University, his specialty being Near Eastern studies. His first published book (1958) was *The Course of Modern Jewish History*. Unlike the other historians previously presented, Sachar does not base his work on original sources. While his scholarship cannot be compared to that of Graetz or Baron, I have thought it fit to include his book, inasmuch as it represents the emergence of a native American historian of the Jews whose philosophy has been influenced by the impact of the European Holocaust and the rise of the State of Israel.

Sachar focuses on the individual in his analysis of anti-Semitism but, unlike Graetz, he finds in the very irrationality of anti-Semitism its rational (psychological) explanation. While upper-class conservatives may have supported respectable anti-Semitism as a means of fighting the liberals, it was the frustrated and embittered lower-middle classes whom the demagogues were able to mobilize for the new nihilistic anti-Semitism.²⁰ Sachar differentiates between men like Von Plehve, who used the Jews as part of their political policy, but personally had little against them,²¹ and those, like Drumont and Ahlwardt, who sublimated their own frustrations in racist Jew-baiting.²² Sachar does not ignore economic considerations, especially in the Slavic countries, but he regards the total nihilism of the Nazis as intelligible only in terms of abnormal psychology.

One theme which appears several times in the Sachar book is the Jews' lack of a "big brother" state to protect them. "The Jews were marked out for special treatment for they alone, of all the minority peoples, had no influential intercessor in Europe to speak and, if necessary, retaliate on their behalf."²³ Sachar also stresses the reactionary aspects of European Culture,²⁴ not because they were such important causes of anti-Semitism, but in order to call attention to today's intellectual Jews that "Europe did not, could not, would not, love them back."²⁵ Both these themes are the historiographic and didactic results of Sachar's Zionist commitment.

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19. *Ibid.*, p. 64f.

20. Howard Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (Cleveland, 1958), p. 225.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 247.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 229, 236.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 222, 228, 233-35, 431.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 437.

The development of Jewish historiography is clearly illustrated by these different analyses of anti-Semitism. Graetz, writing in a pre-Marxian and pre-Freudian intellectual climate, can see anti-Semitism only as a perversion of man's normal rationality. The elimination of ignorance and superstitious religions would solve the problem. The obvious cultural achievement of German Jews should convince any anti-Semite of his error. Dubnow, although living after the impact of Marx, but before Freud had had his major influence, is primarily influenced by his experiences among the competing national minorities of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires. He cannot derive anti-Semitism from the unique social and economic position of the Jews, because he believes in the Diaspora. He, therefore, rejects anti-Semitism as a permanent factor of Jewish life in the Diaspora, and he believes it can be fought and overcome.²⁶ Mahler has, within his Marxist philosophy, an explanation for anti-Semitism. But the total war waged by Germany against the Jews cannot be fitted into this framework of economic competition and class warfare. While Mahler sees Nazism as the reaction of decadent capitalism to rising socialism, Sachar sees it as a violent revolution against the capitalist order and middle-class conventional morality. It was not the capitalist system, but the collapse of the system, that loosed the flood. Mahler disregards the capitalist crisis in America during the '30s when the anti-Semitism which occurred was relatively minor while, on the other hand, Sachar disregards the German industrialists' rational preference for the radical right, due to their violent anti-Communist program. Mahler sees the importance of "diverting the people's unrest" but does not use enough psychological conceptualizations to explain how it takes place. Baron's first edition was published prior to the Second World War. His second edition has not yet reached the modern period. One can be sure that with his encyclopedic knowledge and his use of a multi-disciplinary approach, his treatment of anti-Semitism in the twentieth century will be noted for its complexity and for the variety of explanations offered.

The simultaneous involvement of different parts of the Jewish people with many different nations, cultures and political-economic systems, makes the writing of Jewish history fantastically complex. If the Jews are the most historical of all people, then Jewish historiography should be the most philosophically challenging of all social studies. They are; and it is.

26. Dubnow, *Nationalism and History*, pp. 354-59.

A MAJOR STUDY OF THE SAGES

Review-Essay by THEODORE FRIEDMAN

The Sages—Their Concepts and Beliefs. (Hebrew) By EPHRAIM E. URBACH.
Magnes Press. Jerusalem, 1969. pp. 704.

THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING A MODERN INTERpreter of rabbinic thought are as complex as they are numerous. The initial difficulty derives from the fact that unlike Halakhah, in which area the Sages sought at times to establish fixed norms, nowhere in the field of Aggadah did they even so much as attempt to arrive at a consensus. Perhaps it was this awareness of the free-wheeling character of Aggadah that moved them to declare: "One does not derive norms from the Aggadah" (Y. Peah 2:4). Thus, there is hardly a concept or formulation in rabbinic thought on which there is not a variety of opinion. At most, then, one can speak only of a dominant attitude and even the latter must be hedged with cautious reservation.

No less difficult and determinative is the basic question: to what extent is the thought of the Sages to be regarded as the organic outgrowth of Biblical theology, and to what extent are the Sages to be deemed innovators for whom the Biblical text served more as pretext than text? In other words, is Rabbinic Judaism, in its ideational and valuational aspects, a second and essentially new stage in the history of Judaism, or is it simply the unfolding of all that was explicit and implicit in the world of Biblical thought? Concretely, for example, is the Talmudic Sage the legitimate heir of the prophet and priest or does he represent a radically new type of religious leadership? (This question is dealt with by the author: pp. 509–512; 514–517.)

Thinking and imagination do not take place in a vacuum. Hence, any serious study of rabbinic thought, in order to constitute a contribution to the history of Jewish ideas, must grapple with the problem of cross-cultural influences. How close must the resemblance be between a rabbinic idea and its non-Jewish counterpart before one can definitively establish a Greek, Roman or Persian influence, as the case may be? One illustration will suffice to indicate the ambiguities involved.

Despite the prophet's explicit warning against being affrighted by the omens of the heavens (Jer. 10:3), the Sages dispute (Shabbat 156

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a, b) whether or not Israel's fate is determined by its constellation. Taken together with other related rabbinic sources (see Urbach, pp. 246, 249, 549), the discussion leaves no doubt that the Sages basically shared the universal conviction of their time that the stars wield a potent influence on human affairs. Was the conviction derived from their cultural environment or was it part of an indigenous Jewish tradition, maintained despite official Biblical opposition? Clearly, no simple answer is possible and the truth is that both factors were at work in shaping rabbinic attitudes on the subject.

The final perplexity relates to the question of the proper purview of rabbinic thought. Schechter's choice of title—*Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*—indicates his awareness of the problem. While exhaustiveness of so wide-ranging a theme can hardly be a desideratum, one may legitimately question whether all the themes treated by the author are germane to his framework. In this connection, a listing of the chapter headings will give the reader a notion of the scope of the work. Chapter 1: A Survey of Works on Rabbinic Thought; chapter 2: The Monotheistic Faith; chapter 3: Shekhinah; chapter 4: Immanence and Transcendence of God; chapter 5: The Epithet *Gevurah*; chapter 6: Magic and Miracle; chapter 7: The Power of the Name; chapter 8: The Heavenly Court; chapter 9: God the Creator; chapter 10: Man; chapter 11: Providence; chapter 12: The Written and Oral Torah; chapter 13: The Commandments; chapter 14: The Yoke of Heaven, Love and Fear; chapter 15: Human Destiny in the World (Sin and Death, Reward and Punishment, The Meaning of Suffering, etc.); chapter 16: The People of Israel and its Sages (Sub-sections on The Chosen People Concept, Conversion, etc.); chapter 17: Redemption.

The foregoing considerations may properly serve as the criteria for a serious reader's appreciation of Prof. Urbach's far-ranging work. A study of the book—and it is hardly meant for casual perusal—raises some reflections along the lines indicated above. Its tenth chapter, entitled "Man," will serve as our point of departure.

One's own brief reflection on Biblical anthropology leads to the conclusion that the Bible is ambivalent on the question of man's significance when viewed against his cosmic backdrop. On the one hand, man is conceived of "as little lower than the angels" (Psalms 8:5); yet on the other hand, he is "like a breath, his days like a passing shadow" (Psalms 144:3; cf. Psalms 62:10). Again, on the negative side, one recalls Isaiah's despairing words: "Cease you from man, in whose nostril is a breath, For how little is he to be accounted" (2:22; cf. Job's pessimistic estimate, 7:17; 15:14). Koheleth must obviously be reckoned among the most skeptical about man's permanent meaning. In the light of the foregoing, one may conclude, that, despite Genesis 1:27, the Bible remains distinctly ambivalent on the final significance of the "crown of crea-

tion." Yet, after a thorough assessment of the rabbinic sources, Prof. Urbach concludes that "since man is God's handiwork, the Sages could not help but view him other than in an affirmative light" (p. 224). The conclusion may indeed be warranted but, if so, it clearly marks a significant departure from Biblical thought on the subject. But there is at least one rabbinic source that patently runs counter to the author's conclusion. We have reference to the famous controversy between the Schools of Shammai and Hillel, whether or not it would have been better for man never to have been born (*Eruvin* 13b). (Anent this controversy, a Jewish cynic is once reported to have remarked: "Who ever has such luck?") Our author must obviously fit this controversy into the framework of his conclusion. This he proceeds to do, with an original interpretation of the rabbinic passage. According to Prof. Urbach, the question that exercised the Schools of Shammai and Hillel was whether or not it would have been better for the wicked never to have been born. This reader, at least, remains unconvinced that such, indeed, is the *pshat* of the passage in question. (Incidentally, Maharsha, *ad. loc.*, sensed the singular character of the Tannaitic discussion and seeks, by an ingenious but unwarranted interpretation, to give the passage a more acceptable gloss.)

May it not be that here, as elsewhere, the Sages, heirs to a many-sided, non-monolithic Biblical tradition, simply reflected the fact in their formulation of their own multi-vocal concepts? Moreover, may not this fact offer us the key to the sources of the paradoxes in which rabbinic thinking abounds? When, as happened not infrequently, their own views patently clashed with a traditional Biblical view, would not paradox be the inevitable form in which both views could be affirmed simultaneously? One example may be offered. With the exception of one or two very late Biblical passages (e.g. *Daniel* 12:2), the Biblical world-view is thoroughly this-worldly. How, then, was the weight of the Biblical tradition to be reconciled with the dominant rabbinic concept, to be found in innumerable contexts and forms, that this world is merely "the vestibule" to the world-to-come? Yet, the same Tanna, to whom we owe the image of this world as a mere antechamber, could declare: "Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than all the life of the world-to-come; and one hour of satisfaction in the world-to-come is better than a life-time in this world" (*M. Avot* 4:16, 17).

In the chapter under discussion, as well as in a number of others, the author opens with a *précis* of the Biblical material on the theme under discussion. Here, in the author's words, the purpose of such a summary is "to underscore the extent to which the rabbinic views of man are rooted in the Bible and how they are informed by the Biblical spirit" (p. 192). The sweeping generalization is hardly substantiated, certainly not within the context of rabbinic anthropology. In another

context—in discussing the rabbinic concept of redemption (p. 585)—Prof. Urbach does underscore the distance between Biblical and rabbinic thought. A closer examination of the author's conclusion cited above should substantiate our demurrer.

Prof. Urbach launches his discussion of the rabbinic concept of the soul-body relationship with a re-statement of J. Pedersen's (*Israel—Its Life and Culture*) well-known definition of the term *nefesh* (soul?) in the Bible. Invariably, Pedersen asserts that the term denotes the individual person in his totality and that nowhere does the Bible reveal a trace of the ancient Greek dichotomy between soul and body, *psyche-soma*. (In passing, one ought to note that more recent studies have rejected Pedersen's view as a gross over-simplification.) In any event, in its basic supposition of a dualistic psychology, rabbinic thought in this area is clearly at variance with Biblical teaching. Any student of rabbinic texts will recall the repeated invariable rabbinic juxtaposition of *guf* and *neshamah*. It is noteworthy—a fact unmentioned by the author—that the Sages use the word *nefesh* in its Biblical meaning and invariably, when speaking of soul, employ the term *neshamah*. For example, *pikuah nefesh* obviously means saving a life, not a soul. The usage is too striking and consistent to be accidental. A change in terminology betokens a change in thought. New concepts require new words. In rabbinic thought, the soul is immortal and destined to return to earth after death, clothed in its bodily garb. One looks in vain in the Bible for any concept of the immortality of the soul. There could be none, since the soul was not conceived of as a distinct entity, apart from the body. Despite the gap between the Biblical and rabbinic concepts on this score, the author comes to the conclusion: "Basically, notwithstanding external influences and occasional departures from the Biblical mode of thought, the concept of the unity of body and soul characterizes rabbinic Judaism" (p. 221). In this reviewer's judgment, the very sources adduced by Prof. Urbach lead to the conclusion that the Sages sought to temper the soul-body dualism, but that they regarded these as distinct and often antagonistic entities, there can be little doubt.

In his introduction, the author quite properly disavows any *tendenz* in the writing of his book. One gains the impression, however, that willy-nilly the effort is made to minimize the influence of the foreign cultural environment on the thinking of the Sages. Several examples will serve to illustrate the point. The author denies that any non-Jewish influence is to be seen in the striking rabbinic epithet *Makom* (Place), that denotes God. To be sure, he acknowledges that Philo uses the term in describing the Logos, yet insists that the epithet *Makom* is an indigenous rabbinic invention. But, one asks, if the term—widely found in Tannaitic sources—is of purely Jewish origin, why is it notably missing in Amoraic sources (p. 55)? Why do the Amoraim substitute for it *Ha-*

kadosh Barukh Hu? Further, why was the need felt to offer an explanation of its meaning (Genesis Rabbah 68:9) if, as the author contends, it is a rabbinic invention and not a borrowed term? These two latter facts appear to point to the conclusion that, once the epithet was borrowed—consciously or unconsciously—from some Hellenistic source, its precise meaning became obscure with the passage of time and required definition. The Amoraim, sensing perhaps the foreign origin of the strange-sounding epithet, deliberately substituted for it the Biblically-derived epithet, “The Holy One, Blessed Be He.”

In the context of cross-cultural influences, one cites the rabbinic attitude towards the reality and efficacy of magic, a conviction widely and deeply held in the world of antiquity. Even the repeated Biblical injunctions prohibiting the practice of magic (e.g., Leviticus 19:27) were powerless to stamp out the recourse to magic. No less ineffective in this regard was the rabbinic proscription of a long list of magical practices on the ground that the latter constituted “the ways of the Amorites” and were, thus, forbidden on the basis of the Biblical injunction “neither shall you walk in their statutes” (Leviticus 18:3) (Tosefta Shabbat chs. 6, 7, Lieberman edition). As the author indicates, the Sages permitted those magical acts that were presumed to possess therapeutic value. But there can be no doubt that the Sages, despite the Biblical teaching on the subject, shared the common belief in the efficacy of magic. Otherwise, one would be hard put to it to explain their serious reckoning with magic in a number of Halakhic discussions. Prof. Urbach notes one such instance (p. 86). To his single illustration, others may be readily added. (See the Baraita cited in the name of Bar Kapparah as the basis for the Mishnaic ruling in M. Ketubot 1:1 in Y. Ketubot ch. 1, Halakhah 1). Clearly, more is involved here than the author’s conclusion that the Sages sought to limit magical practices as far as possible.

One final query may be raised. One is puzzled why the author found it pertinent to his theme to include certain sections of the book. Thus, in the final chapter, one meets an entire section devoted to “The Personality and Work of Hillel” (pp. 512–530); another is devoted to “The Conduct of the Sages After the Destruction” (pp. 530–539). The material presented and analyzed is historical in nature and related to the history of the Halakhah. One hastens to add that the presentation is fresh and contains a number of original insights, but what bearing these matters have on rabbinic thinking is nowhere made clear.

On the other hand, the student of rabbinic thought would have welcomed a sustained analysis of the rabbinic approach to Biblical history and its leading personalities; in other words, the rabbinic approach to history. Even the casual student of Talmud and Midrash soon becomes aware that, at the hands of the Sages, Biblical history undergoes a far-reaching re-evaluation. Two examples will suffice to indicate the

nature of the theme which yet remains to be explored. (The author touches on one aspect of the theme briefly, pp. 494–502.) The Biblical portrait of David and that of the Sages stand poles apart. Where the prophets castigate Israel's profligacy in untempered terms, the Sages come to Israel's defense and charge the prophets, including Moses, with sin for their invective. What shift in values and circumstances motivated this basic re-evaluation? A chapter on this subject would have been a desideratum.

None of these reservations and queries, individually or collectively, in any wise diminishes the significant contribution of the book to the field. It must henceforth be regarded as one of the major studies in the history of Judaism produced in our time. Any student of rabbinic thought must have recourse to the volume; if not as the final word on any particular point, then, surely, as an indispensable point of departure. Both in the scope of its content and in its philological-comparative method, it stands alone in its field. As indicated, its content embraces not alone rabbinic thought on a whole variety of themes, but includes the pertinent non-rabbinic sources such as Apocrypha, Philo, Hellenistic writings, Church Fathers and pagan authors of the period. Unlike his predecessors in the field, the author repeatedly seeks to establish the original authoritative text of the statements which he quotes and, on occasion, has recourse to manuscript readings for that purpose. He properly distinguishes between the Tannaitic formulations and the Amoraic variants, an indispensable procedure if one is to trace historical development. While one may, on occasion, legitimately raise some doubts as to some of the conclusions reached by the author on the basis of his comparative studies, the latter are invariably far-ranging and suggestive. A general index, an index to the sources quoted and a comprehensive bibliography render an already valuable work invaluable for students of the period.

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A Lifetime of Jewish Philosophical Research

Iyyunim Bemahshevet Yisrael (Studies in Jewish Thought). By SIMON RAWIDOWICZ. Edited by BENJAMIN C. I. RAVID. Rubin Mass. Jerusalem. 2 volumes. Vol. 1, 1969, xcii + 476 pp.; vol. 2, 1971, xvi + 464 pp.

Reviewed by JACOB KABAKOFF

THE publication of these two posthumous volumes by Simon Ra-

widowicz, who was professor of Hebrew literature and Jewish philosophy at Brandeis University, serves to point up the severe loss sustained by Jewish scholarship as a result of his untimely passing in 1957. Among the major works which he had projected were an introduction to Jewish thought in the middle ages and modern times, as well as volumes on Saadia, Maimonides, Mendelssohn and Krochmal. What we have presented in these volumes, which have been

ably seen through the press by the author's son, are, therefore, only the bricks for the larger structure which Rawidowicz had envisioned.

Benjamin C. I. Ravid has contributed a comprehensive appreciation of the life and thought of his father, a selected bibliography and introductions and notes to both volumes. On the basis of unpublished letters and other materials, he has sought to explain Rawidowicz' motivation in developing his unique views on Jewish existence. His philosophy of "Jewish wholeness" and his emphasis upon the interdependence of the Jewish people in the State of Israel and the diaspora derived from his lifelong researches into the history of Jewish thought. To illustrate the author's approach, which was most fully presented in his two-volume work *Bavel veYerushalayim* (Babylon and Jerusalem, 1957), the editor has seen fit to include a section of fragments from "An Introduction to a Philosophy of Jewish History," reprinted from the above work.

The extensive historiographical study, entitled "Israel's Two Beginnings: The First and Second House," expounds Rawidowicz' approach to Jewish history, which he saw as the product of a creative tension between the values represented by the First Commonwealth and those of the Second Commonwealth. Stressing the primacy of "interpretation" in Jewish life, Rawidowicz took great pains to demonstrate how the Second Commonwealth, through the Oral Law, recast the Bible in its own mold and brought about a virtual recreation of the Jewish past. Moreover, he indicated that the modern religious and political movements in Jewish life, including the one which gave rise to the Jewish State, had to be viewed from the vantage point of interpretation. The role

of the Jewish people in the diaspora, symbolized by the concept "Babylon," was of paramount importance, side by side with that of "Jerusalem." Creative Jewish survival, he maintained, could be assured only by upholding the indivisibility of the Jewish people, in the diaspora as well as in the Jewish State.

Both Saadia and Maimonides, to whom entire sections are devoted in volume I, are viewed as carrying forward, in the context of the medieval world, the process of interpretation. If Saadia was the thinker who inaugurated this process in medieval Jewish thought, Maimonides was the philosopher who brought it to its climax.

Rawidowicz examines the postulates of these two thinkers regarding various aspects of man and God. In his comparative study of their treatment of Biblical anthropomorphism, he insightfully points out that their opposition to this form of Biblical usage was governed more by the inner process begun by Talmudic and Alexandrian interpretation and by the ancient Jewish translations than by Islamic thought. Rawidowicz was particularly concerned with the architectonic aspects of Maimonides' works and with the logical structure of his "Guide" and *Mishneh Torah*, both of which he viewed as being part of a unified whole. His studies of medieval Jewish thought abound in numerous insights, such as his comment that the term *madda*, in the title of Maimonides' work *Sefer ha-Madda*, is not to be translated as knowledge, as is commonly supposed, but that its meaning is closer to faith.

The second volume of Rawidowicz' studies is devoted to the modern period and deals with the thought of Mendelssohn and Krochmal and with modern He-

brew literature. Also included here are studies of four modern figures—M. Z. Feierberg, A. D. Gordon, Moses Hess and Simon Dubnow.

In his analysis of the roles of both Mendelssohn and Krochmal, Rawidowicz broke much new ground. It is to be recalled that he served as an editor of the jubilee edition of Mendelssohn's works and that early in his career he published the standard edition of Krochmal's "Guide For The Perplexed Of Our Time." Above all, he strove to remove the many misconceptions which had been advanced regarding the contributions of these two figures.

In contradistinction to those who assigned to Mendelssohn a role as the "father of Haskalah" and an exponent of liberalism and reform, Rawidowicz enunciated Mendelssohn's central position as a "defender of the Jewish people in his generation." As seen in his well-known controversy with the Protestant theologian, Johann Casper Lavater, Mendelssohn was far more than an apologist for Judaism. In equating Judaism with rational religion and in seeking to separate religion from the state, he took up the battle for Jewish beliefs against their detractors. Rawidowicz' analysis of the philosophy of Mendelssohn's "Jerusalem" and his explanation of the Sage of Dessau's rationale for his translation of the Book of Psalms serve as definitive treatments of these subjects. Mendelssohn emerges as a thinker who fought for Emancipation but who did not champion its ideology.

As indicated, Rawidowicz had early made his mark in Jewish scholarship with his masterful edition of Krochmal's "Guide For The Perplexed Of Our Time," published in Berlin in 1924. Because this edition had long been out of print, he had hoped to reissue the

work during his lifetime, but it was not until four years after his death that his plan was realized when his wife and son republished it, together with a new introduction and several additions by Rawidowicz.

As in the case of Mendelssohn, the studies collected here on Krochmal encompass only a few aspects of his thought, to which the author had hoped to give full-length and organized treatment in a special volume. Here, too, he sought to stake out for Krochmal a role commensurate with his unique contributions and without regard to prior evaluations. Opposing the view of those who viewed Krochmal as an Hegelian, he consistently maintained that the "Galician Socrates" had developed his historiographical approach independently of Hegel. He denied any direct relationship between Krochmal's formulation of the three stages in history and Hegel's dialectical "thesis, antithesis and synthesis." Nor was Krochmal's use of the term "absolute spirituality" akin to that of Hegel. If influences were to be discerned in Krochmal's work, Rawidowicz asserted, it were better to seek them in Maimonides and Abraham ibn Ezra, as well as in the critical approach of Azariah de Rossi.

Rawidowicz critically examined the claims of those who saw in Krochmal an affinity for various trends in Judaism, including Hasidism, Haskalah and even Zionism. He could be caustic and devastating in breaking down these claims. He demonstrated that, although Krochmal was a descendant of the Besht, he could not accept the irrationality of Hasidism. While Krochmal had a marked influence on the development of Haskalah, and while his "Guide" served as a sourcebook for its adherents, his own concept of Haska-

lah is shown to have been radically different from that of its modern adherents. Krochmal's main quest was ever to develop a rational, common-sense approach to Jewish tradition and its development.

As far as nationalism is concerned, Krochmal spoke, not in terms of Jewish nationhood, but of the Jewish spirit. At best, he may be considered a precursor of the national idea and even then not in the secular sense of latter-day Zionism. Because of Krochmal's unique role, Rawidowicz characterizes him as one who "summarized Jewish thought up to his time, on the one hand, and who ushered in modern Jewish thought, on the other hand."

In the section on modern Hebrew literature, the editor has presented some of Rawidowicz' challenging views on the development of this literature in the light of his original conception of Jewish history. Rawidowicz particularly examined the role of H. N. Bialik as the champion of the type of Judaism represented by the Second Commonwealth, of that type of Judaism which upheld the role of halakhah and aggadah interpreting the Biblical tradition. Despite Bialik's ambivalent attitude to the galut, the author views him as an exponent of Second Commonwealth values. On the other hand, he takes to task the essayist and poet, Yaakov Steinberg, for emphasizing Biblical values at the expense of the Talmud and later Jewish interpretation. In his essay, "Fearing the Bible," Rawidowicz pointed to the dangers facing modern Jewish statehood in extolling the Biblical view in isolation from later developments, and he adduced various statements from Ben-Gurion and the "Canaanites" in support of his thesis. Throughout his discussion of modern Hebrew literature, there runs the plea

to avoid one-sidedness in the evaluation of the Jewish past.

Rawidowicz represented a unique combination of intensive Jewish learning and general scholarship. He was a man of temperament and verve who renewed in Hebrew literature the tradition of the polemical interchange of ideas which so often characterized it in the past. While he stood alone in his espousal of his philosophy of Jewish survival, his thesis regarding the indivisibility of the Jewish people in the diaspora and the State of Israel still offers a challenge to all those concerned with the Jewish future. His researches, which are incorporated in his two volumes of "Studies In Jewish Thought," bespeak a lifetime of preoccupation, not only with the specific problems of Jewish philosophy, but, also, with their implication for Jewish existence in our time.

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What Jews Have Believed

Jewish Theology. By SAMUEL S. COHON. Assen. The Netherlands, 1971.

Reviewed by LEVI A. OLAN

THERE are two attitudes toward theology. One emphasizes the practice of religion without defining the faith. In its extreme form, it looks upon theology as a sin against God, and calls for faith without an understanding by the mind. God, it says, is unknowable in theology. The opposite view argues that without theology, God—or religion—is uncommunicable. All discourse with other disciplines becomes im-

possible. Religion, say these defenders, does not exist for man without some formulation of his view of God.

The publication of a volume with the title, *Jewish Theology*, awakens an old debate as to whether such an enterprise exists in Judaism. While the Paulinian emphasis on belief is natural to a religion in which there is the central mystery of God being incarnated in a man, Judaism places its emphasis on the deed, not on the creed. Mendelssohn, in the eighteenth century, denied the existence of Jewish dogmatics. Judaism is not a revealed religion but a revealed law. Kaufmann Kohler later accused Mendelssohn of exerting "a deteriorating influence upon the normal development of Jewish faith under new social conditions."

Judaism certainly has a theology, even though it is not a theological religion in the Christian sense. Judaism is God-centered and faith is a dogma. Schechter suggested that theology is present but that we are not aware of it. It was not formulated. He avoids the issue by calling his book *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, not *The Theology of the Rabbis*. When speculation and definitions arose among Jews in response to radical cultural change, attempts were made at rationalization and systemization. The challenge of Hellenism, scholasticism, and German idealism brought forth Philo, Maimonides, and Mendelssohn.

The Jewish Renaissance after Mendelssohn made the cultivation of *Jüdisches Wissenschaft* its main object and neglected Jewish theology altogether. Rappoport, Zunz, Jost make no mention of it. A few pioneers of Reform made an effort, —Geiger, Holdheim and Formstecher among others—but no system was created. It was not until 1910, when Kohler's *Theology*

appeared, that there was a clear and systematic statement of Jewish beliefs rooted in the tradition. It is now a classic, and useful for its clarification of Judaism as a system of religious thought. There is no mention in it of Freud, Einstein, or Marx, while Darwin is mentioned once. It was adequate for its time, but a new world has arisen since and it is time for a new formulation of Jewish theology.

There is an urgency to this need; it may be said that the survival of Judaism depends upon it. We are now losing the better Jewish minds who show a disdain and, at best, an indifference to Judaism as a faith. There is much ado about Jewish cultism, but there is a rejection of Judaism as one of the significant systems of faith for modern man. The critical issue for Jews is the relevance of their theology for our time.

This volume, by the late professor of Theology of Hebrew Union College, is a posthumous publication. It is a useful guide for students and laymen who seek answers to the question of what Jewish thinkers, from the Bible to Mendelssohn, have said about God, man, and the soul. It is in the nature of a selected compendium of responses, by Jews, to the theological issues during the various periods of Jewish history. The matter of proof for the existence of God, for example, is systematically recorded, from the Bible and Talmud to the middle years. The only modern reference is to Kant. This, the text explains, is because the author did not complete the chapter before he died. One can say, regretfully, that this is characteristic of the whole book.

There are some bright insights which shine through the pages. In a section called "Theology and

Language" the author cautions the Jewish theologian to exercise "special care in the choice of terms." The general theological vocabulary of the German- and English-speaking world has evolved out of Christian experience and "conveys meanings that do not adequately express the thoughts of Judaism." A religious community creates its own distinctive vocabulary which may not have exact equivalents in other languages. Salvation, grace, justification arose from the Christian experience. Torah, Mizvah, Kedushah are native to Judaism. Here is a wise warning for Jewish theologians who all too often appropriate Christian words without discrimination.

There is a perceptive chapter on prophetic inspiration and its relationship to the experience of the creative artist and scientist. It is a thoughtful consideration of the nature of revelation and how modern man may understand the declaration "Thus saith the Lord." There are other instances in the book which reveal a fresh and challenging insight into some theological issues that trouble us today. This makes it more regrettable that the author did not live long enough to bring his work up to meet the challenge which confronts the Jew today in the face of a rising secularism and a new scientific revolution. The value of Dr. Cohon's book is enhanced by a thoughtfully selected bibliography which can help a student, or even an interested layman, to pursue some of the issues of Jewish theology. The footnotes and the index are skillfully done.

This is only the first in a series of volumes which are to be published from the papers which Professor Cohon had prepared before his death. They will add to our theological literature, even as does this one. The publication of *Jewish Theology* is a strong reminder

to us that we desperately need a new Jewish theology to meet the cultural revolution of our time.

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An Assessment of the Jewish Contribution

The Jewish Writer in America. By ALAN GUTTMANN. Oxford University Press. New York, 1971. 256 pp. \$7.95.

Reviewed by NORMA SKOLNIK

UNTIL very recently, the field of American Jewish literature had been an unexplored frontier. Those who approached it critically and attempted to treat it as a subject for serious study have come, largely, from other fields—usually specializing in English or American literature. Having recently inquired about the possibility of doing graduate work in American Jewish literature at one of America's largest seminaries, I was told that, since no one specializes in this field, a history professor is the advisor for those who wish to pursue studies in this area.

Now, Alan Guttman has produced what may prove to be the most comprehensive and far-reaching study of American Jewish literature yet written. His study of American Jewish writing may help to raise the academic standing of this field to heretofore unattained heights. Before analyzing the *Jewish Writer in America*, however, let us first consider the works on this subject that have been done previously.

In 1961, Robert Alter wrote *After the Tradition*, an impressive work which included essays on

Modern Jewish literature that Alter had written for a variety of periodicals. Most of these selections dealt with the Israeli scene, while only a third of the book was devoted to American Jewish writers. Although Alter's essays on Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Elie Weisel showed great insight, he discussed them as individual writers—not as part of a literature in general.

In *Jews and Americans* (1965), Irving Malin explored the theme of "Jewishness" through an examination of the works of seven authors who deal with the Jew in America: Karl Shapiro, Delmore Schwartz, Isaac Rosenfeld, Leslie Fiedler, Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth. The themes discussed in relation to each of the seven writers are exile, fathers and sons, time, head and heart, transcendence, irony, fantasy and parable. Malin's literary criticism consists of the application of these topics to each writer in turn. In this process, his criticism is often reduced to generalizations that are insufficiently supported.

Other than some anthologies, which include smatterings of literary criticism (Angoff and Levin's *Rise of American Jewish Literature*, Saul Bellow's edition of *Great Jewish Short Stories*), there has been little else written about American literature. Now, *The Jewish Writer in America*, an outstanding work of criticism, is also the first literary study of the conversion of Jews to "Americanism" and their accompanying loss of ethnic identity.

The scope of Guttman's book is quite extensive. In all, Guttman discusses the work of 26 American Jewish writers. Although the distribution of attention focused upon certain writers is uneven (40 pages devoted to Saul Bellow and only 8 to Bernard

Malamud), the essays are perceptive and give us valuable insights into the place of each writer in the history of American Jewish literature. He deals not only with bonafide American Jewish writers like Lewisohn, Roth, Bellow and Malamud, but with such nominally Jewish writers as Paul Goodman, and Norman Mailer. He is quite kind to these writers, whose attitude toward Judaism is, in my opinion, void of any cultural value. Furthermore, Guttman refers to Norman Mailer as an "eccentric individualist," when egotist might be the more applicable term for a writer whose works can be summed up in his own title, *Advertisements For Myself*.

Guttman's approach to Jewish literature centers around historical and sociological perspectives. He begins his work with a discussion of early American Jewish writers and their emergence on the American literary scene. Emma Lazarus, Abraham Cahan and Mary Antin are only a few of the writers whose works are classic accounts of the crisis of ethnic identity they confronted in 19th century America.

Guttman discusses writers such as Henry Roth, Daniel Fuchs and Isaac Rosenfeld, in a section called "The Promised Land." Here he analyzes that aspect of American Jewish literature which describes the experience of second generation American Jews moving from childhood to adulthood as they move from one culture to another. In this type of literature, the treatment of the characters closely parallels the process of growth of the American Jewish community. Guttman's chapter includes many poignant insights into the painful process that accompanied the birth of this unique type of writing.

In dealing with such major American Jewish writers as Roth, Bellow and Malamud, Guttman

concentrates more attention upon Saul Bellow than upon any other American Jewish writer. In a detailed assessment of his work, Guttman analyzes Bellow's view of America in terms of his characters and the meaning of their experiences. He then defends his view of Bellow as the archetypal Jewish writer. From Bellow, Guttman proceeds to a discussion of Malamud's expert use of metaphor and artistic representation of Jewish theology. His analysis of Malamud's symbolic use of suffering in his novels is particularly incisive. Although we might disagree with Guttman's view that Malamud has "widened the definition of Jew to the point of meaninglessness," his assessment of Malamud's stress upon the Jew's responsibility to fellow Jews is admirably done.

Philip Roth's sensitivity to the problems of assimilation is also studied in depth and Guttman furnishes his readers with a detailed portrayal of the Jewish identity crisis in Roth's novels. Roth's characters, as Guttman sees it, have rejected the world of their fathers, but have yet to come to grips with their own world. They cannot escape the influence that Judaism has had upon their lives, but are unable to commit themselves to a Jewish way of life. They are all, more or less, like Alexander Portnoy, Roth's most famous character, whose desperate attempts to free himself from his Jewish roots always fail.

In the chapter entitled "The End of the Jewish People?" Gutt-

mann makes two important observations about the subject of American Jewish literature. According to him, the assimilation of the American Jewish writer has reached the point where there is a national, rather than an ethnic, audience for his literature. American Jewish writers may, therefore, be making a transition into obscurity when they write for a national audience. Furthermore, Guttman states that the survival in America of a significant and identifiably Jewish literature depends upon the unlikely conversion to Judaism of what he terms the "intractable generation." These irreverent and radical Youths who no longer "choose to be chosen" will never produce Jewish literature, he feels. One can admire Guttman's courage in attempting to assess the foreboding future of American Jewish literature. However, we may ask if his pessimism is justified. It is to be hoped that some Jewish writers will accept the challenge to go against the tide of assimilation and the loss of ethnic identity. Perhaps there will be those, like Cynthia Ozick, who will recognize that Jews are doomed to aridity if they do not emphasize their Jewishness. As Miss Ozick has stated, "If Jews blow into the narrow end of the shofar, they'll be heard far. But if they choose to be mankind rather than Jewish, and blow into the wider part, they will not be heard at all."

NORMA SKOLNIK *is interested in the field of American Jewish literature.*

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